



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

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Michael P. Luisi, Chairman | G. Warren Elliott, Vice Chairman
Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

March 19, 2018

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross,

Please accept these comments from the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council on wind energy development in the Northeast region. The Council manages more than 64 marine species with 7 fishery management plans (FMPs)¹ in federal waters and is composed of members from the coastal states of New York to North Carolina (including Pennsylvania). Marine fisheries are profoundly important to the social and economic well-being of Mid-Atlantic communities and provide numerous benefits to the nation, including domestic food security. In 2015, the commercial seafood industry in the Mid-Atlantic region supported 100,954 jobs, \$13.9 billion in sales, \$3.2 billion in income, and \$5.1 billion in value added impacts across the Mid-Atlantic.² Commercial fishermen landed 648 million pounds of finfish and shellfish, earning \$512 million in landings revenue, while 2.0 million recreational anglers took 12.4 million fishing trips and spent nearly \$3.5 billion on trip and equipment expenditures.²

At its February meeting, the Council passed the following motion:

“Move to submit a letter to the Secretaries of Interior and Commerce requesting that: (1) no new wind energy areas be sited, nor project designs finalized, until the study is complete and fisheries impacts can be properly evaluated and (2) request that NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] adopt a more active role in working with BOEM [Bureau of Ocean Energy Management] to effectively site future wind energy projects.”

The study noted in the motion refers to the work that the Council staff are doing with the NOAA Fisheries “Wind Team” to spatially document the fisheries value of the Northeast US continental shelf

¹ Fourteen species are directly managed with specific FMPs. These include summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, Atlantic bluefish, Atlantic mackerel, *Illex* and longfin squids, butterflyfish, Atlantic surfclams, ocean quahogs, golden and blueline tilefish, spiny dogfish (joint with the New England Council), and monkfish (joint with the New England Council). In addition, more than 50 forage species are managed as “ecosystem components” in all seven FMPs. The Council sets possession and landing limits to prevent the expansion of directed fisheries on these forage species in the Mid-Atlantic.

² National Marine Fisheries Service. 2017. Fisheries Economics of the United States, 2015. U.S. Dept. Commerce, NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-F/SPO-170, 247p. Available at: http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/Assets/economics/publications/FEUS/FEUS-2015/Report-Chapters/FEUS%202015-AllChapters_Final.pdf.

and identify key biological/ecological resources in our region. This information is being developed during 2018 with the intent of allowing NOAA Fisheries and the Council and its stakeholders to more effectively engage with BOEM on wind energy planning discussions in the Northeast region.

The Council supports policies for US energy development including wind energy development and operations that will sustain the health of marine ecosystems and fisheries resources while minimizing the risks to the marine environment and fisheries. It is critical that the best information be used to identify areas for wind leasing within our region.

The Council's Policy on Wind Energy (attached) should be considered with these comments and can also be found at: <http://www.mafmc.org/habitat/>.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C Moore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter "C" being large and prominent.

Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

cc: J. Coakley, W. Elliott, M. Luisi, C. Oliver