

SALMON ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON MARINE PLANNING

The Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) received an update on marine planning and the outcomes of the recent meeting of the Ad Hoc Marine Planning Committee from Mr. Kerry Griffin focused on the Offshore Wind Leasing Process. At this point, it is hard to evaluate the potential impacts and changes to the salmon fishery off the coasts of Oregon, Washington, and California from the introduction of the projected wind farms. The SAS feels that our fishing seasons are already restricted due to diminished salmon escapement from distressed rivers and climate change. Further interruption and additional area closures would be detrimental to salmon fishermen. While alternative energy development is essential to our future, the planning process should ensure that fishing industries and coastal communities are not adversely affected.

While the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and the wind energy industry seem to understand well the general impacts of wind farms on marine ecosystems, we remain in doubt of the outcome of these installations on specific fisheries. Currently, the process seems driven by the industry with very few standards imposed by the regulatory agencies which would protect existing uses. Noise from the turbines, construction of the platforms and placement of the energy transferring cables leave too many unknowns. For example, salmon migrate in various depths along the full length of our coastline from California to Alaska, guided by a magnetic fields. There is the potential for migratory disruption due to the effects of electromagnetic leakage from shore transmission lines, which has not been studied in great detail. More research should be conducted to better understand and be able to avoid or mitigate for changes in the migratory patterns.

The SAS shares the concerns raised during the discussion about potential impacts to vessel transit to and from port through, or around, a wind farm. Vessel safety around wind farms falls under the U.S. Coast Guard's jurisdiction who, will control any activity in the farm area including implementing surrounding "buffer" zones. Safe vessel passage must be the foremost priority, especially in hazardous weather, while balancing safety and operational concerns such as preventing terrorism.

Placement of the "farms" was one of the questions asked by fishermen and why a particular spot in the ocean was chosen. The SAS is concerned that these farms will lead to the closure of existing fishing grounds without taking into consideration an existing industry. BOEM's reliance on vessel monitoring system (VMS) or automated information system (AIS) data misses a great amount of knowledge, and completely excludes recreational fishing. Information has been coming in from different sources; the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Ecotrust and the Oregon Salmon Commission. Additional input from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and NMFS for tuna and shrimp from all three states also needs to be considered for a complete picture of the potentially impacted fisheries along with fishery mapping. Overlay mapping of all fisheries and adapted to bottom contour would give us an accurate view of our coast and tell us where a development might be best sited.

Finally, the process does not yet include policies to deal with unanticipated adverse effects to fisheries. If a leaseholder is allowed to install and operate a wind farm, it should be monitored by the individual states involved, at the leaseholder's expense. A notable change in fish migration or behavior due to noise, vibration, electromagnetic effects, or unknown cause that can be traced back to the site, would result in a shutdown of the affected site or farm. Operations would only be allowed to resume following repairs to mitigate or eliminate the effects and retesting by the state agency.

PFMC
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