



Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Marc Gorelnik, Chair | Merrick J. Burden, Executive Director

July 28, 2023

California Wind Energy Lease Holders

RWE Renewables

Vineyard Offshore

Equinor

Invenergy/Even Keel Wind

Oceanwinds

Re: Offshore Wind Energy Lease Fisheries Communications Plans

Dear Sirs and Madams:

Thank you for your recent participation in the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) Marine Planning Committee (MPC) meeting on June 6, 2023, and for sharing your approach to communications with potentially affected fishing communities or their representatives. As you are aware, the prospect of industrial-scale energy facility development has significant implications to the ability to continue commercial and recreational fishing activities, as well as to related industries such as shipping, seafood processing, charter fishing operations, tourism, and more. Local and regional economies of fishing-dependent communities as well as important marine habitats and ecosystem services will also be impacted. Developing reliable lines of communication between Lessees and the fishing community will maximize the likelihood of avoiding and minimizing such impacts.

The Council provides an excellent forum for communication between the fishing community and the offshore wind (OSW) Lessees and offers multiple opportunities each year for direct participation with the Council itself or with Council Advisory Bodies such as the MPC. To facilitate communication, we ask that you include the Council in communications regarding fisheries issues, design specifications, site assessment and characterization activities, periodic reports, and any other issue that be relevant to commercial and recreational fishing on the U.S. West Coast. During the June 6th meeting, MPC members suggested that the California Lessees consider jointly compiling relevant information and resources, so community members, fishery participants, and interested members of the public could access important information from one website. The Council may be able to assist with development of such a website, similar to what was developed by the [New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils](#). In addition, the MPC has also suggested that continued coordination efforts be made by and between Lessees when preparing and sharing draft Fisheries Communications Plans to facilitate engagement and reduce the burden on fishing communities when responding to multiple Fisheries Communications Plans.

When identifying potentially affected communities, we recommend that you consider the spatial operations of fisheries, particularly those that operate in multiple areas along the U.S. West Coast. For example, the West Coast highly migratory species fishery has participants from California, Oregon, and Washington that opportunistically operate within the entirety of the Exclusive Economic Zone off the U.S. West Coast, including areas covered by your lease. Many fishery participants, including Treaty Tribes, are not based within the vicinity of your OSW leases, but they will nonetheless be affected by OSW development activities. The Council can assist you in identifying those participants who should be included in the audience for fisheries communications plans.

Finally, recognizing that site assessment and characterization activities will be taking place in the near future, we wish to emphasize one particular concern about the installation and decommissioning of meteorological buoys (met buoys). The proposed Renewable Energy Modernization Rule assigns permitting authority for met buoys to the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE), via its nationwide permitting (NWP) process. NWP 5, which covers this type of activity, states that such devices should be removed “*to the maximum extent practicable and the site restored to pre- construction elevations.*” We support greater assurance that such anchors will be removed if at all possible, and the site restored to pre-project condition. This is particularly important to preserve the ability to access fishing grounds and prosecute fisheries, especially trawling and fixed gear fishing activities. Anchors and other material left on the seafloor can damage fishing gear and create hazardous situations for fishing participants. These concerns are described in our March 2023 [comment letter](#) to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management on the proposed rule.

We look forward to continuing the dialog initiated on June 6th. Please contact Council Staff Officer Kerry Griffin with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Marc Gorelnik
Council Chair

KFG:acl

Cc: Council Members
Doug Boren
Mike Conroy
Susan Chambers
Lilah Ise