

Fisheries Technical Working Group (F-TWG) Office Hours Summary

Thursday, June 1, 2023, from 4:00 to 6:00 PM EDT

Virtual Meeting

Background

This summary describes key discussion points and provides an overview of the first of four F-TWG office hour style meetings held on Thursday, June 1, 2023, through a virtual meeting platform.

The slides from the meeting presentation are available here: [PowerPoint Presentation \(nyftwg.com\)](#)

Goals for the meeting included:

- Provide an overview of Master Plan 2.0: Deep Water, and provide a forum for the fishing industry to engage, explore, and coordinate views and comments on the process.
- Adhere to our ground rules for an effective meeting (e.g., stay on track, let others speak, be respectful, and focus on the substance not the people).

Invitations were sent to F-TWG members and other stakeholders. Fishing industry participants were encouraged to join throughout the 2-hour session to ask questions, make comments and suggestions, and participate in discussions. Participants that attended represented both commercial and recreational fishing interests. Staff from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), Tetra Tech, the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), and the Cadmus Group were also present to provide technical, logistical, and facilitation support.

Fishing Industry attendees are referred to interchangeably as participants or stakeholders in the summary.

Rules of the Road, Purpose, and Intent

The meeting opened with a review of meeting ground rules, the goals of the office hour style meetings, and the F-TWG's mission. NYSERDA, Tetra Tech, and CBI welcomed the group and underscored that the F-TWG is a forum for discussion between the commercial fishing community and offshore wind (OSW) developers to provide advice and input to New York State (NYS). The June 1st office hour meeting focused on the ongoing work Tetra Tech is doing as part of Master Plan 2.0 and provided a forum for input from F-TWG members and other stakeholders.

Review of the Master Plan 2.0 Purpose and Process

NYSERDA provided an overview of Master Plan 2.0: Deep Water. The purpose of Master Plan 2.0 is to set an organizing principal for OSW that continues to advance past the 60-meter contour. It provides an opportunity for NYS to evaluate and characterize the risks and opportunities for OSW development in a comprehensive, sequential, and logical approach. The Master Plan 2.0 process seeks to identify areas in the region that are of greatest and least risk to environmental and fisheries resources and users, and to recommend to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) areas or topics for further assessment.

Area of Analysis (AoA) and Fisheries Summary

Tetra Tech provided an overview of research being done to inform the Master Plan 2.0 process. Throughout this overview, stakeholders were encouraged to participate by providing input and asking questions.

Tetra Tech began by discussing the AoA and potential target fisheries within this designated area. The list of potential target fisheries is informed by the Northeast Ocean Data Portal and input provided by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The AoA consists of three zones characterized by different depth contours: Zone 1 is 60-150 meters (32-82 fathoms), Zone 2 is 150-2000 meters (82-1,093 fathoms), and Zone 3 is 2000-3000 meters (1,093-1,640 fathoms).

Summary of Questions and Discussion

Tetra Tech and NYSERDA engaged with stakeholders representing various fishing interests and discussed several concerns and questions regarding the AoA.

Stakeholders emphasized a primary concern that the process of evaluating further areas for OSW is moving too quickly, as there has been limited implementation of currently approved projects. The impacts of currently leased OSW projects have yet to be felt, and this lack of data makes it more difficult to consider the risks associated with further development and creates a lot of uncertainty for stakeholders.

- NYSERDA responded and agreed that many of the Master Plan 2.0 considerations are intentionally early in the process of exploring deep-water OSW. The process is intended to identify information and data needs ahead of development discussions that will be had in the future.

Synthesis of Comments Summary

Tetra Tech provided an overview of a synthesis of existing comments from a variety of prior OSW efforts across a range of geographic areas. The goal of this effort was to identify broad environmental concerns associated with OSW development. 57 comments were reviewed, and all comments were from fishing industry representatives. The comments were grouped into 19 thematic categories, and the results were displayed in a table showing the number of comments by theme, highlighting the most common themes. Some specific comments made by NMFS regarding Master Plan 2.0 were highlighted, and related to:

- Concerns about impacts of OSW on the cold pool process
- Concerns about impacts of OSW on the Frank R. Lautenberg Deep-Sea Coral Protection Area and the Georges Bank Coral Protection Area
- An emphasis on the importance of underwater canyons for fisheries
- Concerns about impacts on shelf break habitats for marine mammals in Zones 1 and 2
- A concern that Zone 3 habitat usage is not well known or studied

The most identified themes across the 57 comments included:

- Cumulative Impacts – impacts from already leased areas to the east coast nearshore environment.

- Excluded Fisheries – mention of how floating technology will likely exclude all current fishing gear types.
- Fisheries Surveys – potential for fishing surveys (as currently conducted) to be disrupted, or not occur due to floating infrastructure.
- Infrastructure Hazards – the feasibility of vessels to move within floating infrastructure.
- Navigational Safety – the ability for vessels to safely operate within floating infrastructure.
- Transit – the need for specific areas solely used for transit within floating structures.
- Upwelling – potential impacts to upwelling events.
- Whale Entanglement – potential for whales to become entangled in floating infrastructure and/or debris within a floating farm.

Summary of Questions and Discussion

Tetra Tech and NYSERDA engaged with stakeholders about the synthesis of comments, identifying important topics of concern that are missing and discussing the relative importance of the identified themes. Stakeholders agreed that all the comment categories were important and stressed that many concerns are interrelated.

A stakeholder concerned with scallop fisheries suggested the inclusion of comments from the scallop industry from the New York Bight OSW development process.

- Tetra Tech responded that they are in the process of expanding the synthesis of comments and are working to find common themes and crossovers between the New York Bight comments and input provided as part of deep-water OSW projects.

A stakeholder brought up concerns regarding the interaction between larval transport and upwelling, and the potential impacts of OSW development on these processes. The stakeholder recommended the consideration of two studies in the recent Responsible Offshore Development Alliance (RODA) Synthesis of the Science Report that modeled impacts on larval transport.

- Tetra Tech made a note of these concerns, acknowledging that the interrelated nature of many of these areas of concern is essential to consider.

A stakeholder brought up concerns about deep water OSW and floating wind farm technology. The inter-array cables associated with floating wind farms will effectively prevent trawling and similar types of fishing activity in the area, such as use of a scallop dredge. The stakeholder also expressed concern that floating inter-array cables will prevent fishery managers from conducting bottom surveying, as the equipment will not be able to be deployed.

- Tetra Tech will make note of this significant concern. Part of the Master Plan 2.0 effort is the creation of a deep-water technologies report that will provide more context regarding the specific details of the technology involved in the potential developments.

Stakeholders expressed concerns about the cumulative impacts of OSW that are not captured by the current synthesis of comments. The impacts of currently approved developments have yet to be fully felt by fishery managers, economies, local communities, and ecosystems. Therefore, it is difficult to consider the risks of further OSW development in the absence of data about currently approved

projects. It is essential to carefully consider the net impacts of all these approved and proposed development projects.

- The importance of cumulative impacts was appreciated and has been identified as one of the primary themes of concern among fishing industry representatives. It will be heavily considered in future research and discussions.

A stakeholder expanded on concerns about cumulative impacts specifically related to the scallop fishing industry. Scallop harvesting is managed by area, and there are a set number of areas that are rotated in and out of production. If one of these areas were to be excluded, then the scallops in that area are effectively lost to the scallop industry. The cumulative impacts of area exclusion could have extreme impacts on the industry.

- The cumulative impacts of development are one of the primary concerns identified in previous input to OSW projects. This concern about the nature of scallop fishing and the cumulative impacts of creating areas of exclusion for the scallop industry is appreciated, will be noted, and will inform future research and discussions.

Stakeholders also emphasized the importance of socio-economic conditions, and the potential impacts OSW development may have on communities and economies. They stressed that economic drivers need to be carefully considered when evaluating the concerns of commercial fishing interests.

A specific economic concern expressed by stakeholders involved the potential liability risks ships may face when operating near OSW developments. If the financial risk of operating near OSW infrastructure is seen by insurers as too high, it may be difficult or impossible for fishing vessels to get insurance to operate in or around OSW developments, effectively excluding them from those areas.

- Tetra Tech will take this feedback about concerns that are not already reflected in the list of identified themes, will re-review the 57 comments with these in mind, and will incorporate these concerns into future research.

Summary of Closing Questions and Discussion

Stakeholders stressed the importance of the Hudson Canyon for fishing interests, and passionately advocated against any efforts to restrict fishing in this area. Stakeholders cautioned that there will be significant opposition to OSW development if the considerations of fishing interests, both commercial and recreational, are not fully incorporated in the process.

- Tetra Tech identified in the AoA figure that NOAA has proposed a Hudson Canyon Sanctuary (part of a separate effort), and that this potential designation is on a different process and timeline than the Master Plan 2.0. Tetra Tech acknowledged the need to review comments identifying fisheries concerns from the NOAA Sanctuary.

A stakeholder heavily involved in the recreational and commercial fishing communities further stressed the importance of understanding that many families and communities have made their livings fishing in the designated AoA for generations. The stakeholder stated that there must be serious efforts made to include the interests of these groups in the discussions about OSW development and to preserve their way of life, or else there will be serious opposition to OSW development efforts.

The stakeholder went on to suggest making information and data more accessible. Providing a map file that shows the geographic range of the AoA and providing data in fathoms and miles (in addition to meters and kilometers) are two examples of how to increase transparency.

- This feedback is appreciated and is at the core of what the Master Plan 2.0 process is seeking to address. It will be incorporated into ongoing efforts and will inform continued research and data gathering. These stakeholders in the commercial and recreational fishing communities are encouraged to join future office hour meetings to ask questions, voice concerns, and engage in the Master Plan 2.0 process.
- NYSERDA will assess the possibility of posting a map file on the F-TWG website and will incorporate the feedback about data accessibility into future work.

Next Steps

- Tetra Tech will continue with their Master Plan 2.0 Fisheries Engagement Approach and will continue to hold facilitated listening sessions and informal office hours for F-TWG members and other stakeholders.
- Tetra Tech will incorporate the feedback and input from this meeting into ongoing research and data gathering efforts.
- The next office hour meeting will be held on June 26th, 2023, from 12:00 – 2:00pm (EDT).