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

Monday, June 26, 2023, from 12:00 to 2:00 PM
Virtual Meeting

Background

This summary describes key discussion points and provides an overview of the second of four F-TWG sponsored office hour style meetings, held on Monday, June 26, 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 fishing stakeholders 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 representatives of fishing interests and fishing industry stakeholders. Fishing industry participants were encouraged to join throughout the 2-hour session to ask questions, make comments and suggestions, and participate in discussions. Stakeholders that attended represented both commercial and recreational fishing interests. Staff from 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.

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, F-TWG's mission, and a round of introductions. Morgan Brunbauer (NYSERDA) and Patrick Field (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 26th 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 fishing industry F-TWG members and other fishing industry stakeholders. Office hour meetings are currently intended as a forum specifically for stakeholders directly associated with fishing interests and provide a space for these stakeholders to express their concerns and ask questions about the Master Plan 2.0 process.

Review of the Master Plan 2.0 Purpose and Process

NYSERDA provided an overview of Master Plan 2.0: Deep Water as well as a review of Master Plan 1.0. Master Plan 1.0 was a planning process to understand how best to reach New York's previous clean OSW goal of 2.4 gigawatts, which has since been increased to 9 gigawatts. It sought feedback from many different stakeholders, including the fishing industry, and included approximately 20 studies that assessed a variety of concerns. The process outlined risks to environments, fisheries, and other issues related to areas of suitability for OSW.

The purpose of the 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 New York State 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. It is an approach focused on the regional level and is meant to capture feedback from fishing interests and other stakeholders. These office hour style meetings are part of this process to gather feedback from fishing interests, and the process is intended to assess whether there are gaps in data, or changes in fishing industry concerns regarding deep water OSW.

Area of Analysis (AoA) Depths and Floating Wind Footprint

Tetra Tech provided an overview of the AoA. The AoA is split into three zones at different depths. Zone 1 is the closest to shore and extends from the 60-meter contour to 250 meters (32-82 fathoms) and has an approximate area of 12,040 square miles. Zone 2 spans the steeply sloped continental shelf break from 150-2,000 meters (82-1,093 fathoms) and has an area of approximately 6,830 square miles. Zone 3 extends from the continental break out to 3,000 meters (1,093-1,640 fathoms) and has an area of approximately 16,800 square miles.

The majority of OSW in the AoA is anticipated to be floating installations. There are multiple prototypes of floating OSW platforms with different styles of anchoring and cable diameters. Floating OSW infrastructure is built to a significant scale, and includes a platform, anchoring lines, and inter-array cables.

Summary of Questions and Discussions

Participants asked which of the presented platform designs are the most commonly used or preferred in other OSW developments and asked about potential depths of the inter-array cables used in these floating OSW installations.

- NYSERDA responded that the depths of inter-array cables are highly variable and have not been decided on, as this is a project specific detail. However, the depths of the inter-array cables will be below any vessel hull.
- The different platform designs have different mooring types and anchoring systems, which are related to the sediment structure of the area being developed. The platform designs will be highly dependent on the characteristics of the area, and developers are still involved in determining these details.

Participants asked how coral zones will be included in the assessments of the AoA, specifically if they will be off-limits for development and mooring.

- This process does not directly regulate the AoA but will inform the recommendations made to BOEM. Coral zones identified during this process, from research and stakeholder feedback, will be included in the assessment and will inform the recommendations.

Participants stressed the importance of studying oceanographic processes and the potential impacts of OSW development on these processes. This is an area that has significant data gaps and could be highly relevant for fisheries.

- The importance of studying possible disruptions of oceanographic currents and the impact on fisheries is one of the priorities of the Masterplan 2.0 process, and this additional feedback is appreciated.

Participants expressed concern that the floating platform designs presented would effectively prevent bottom dredging fishing near these arrays. This makes the location of these facilities important for fishing interests, especially those that are area-dependent.

Stakeholders went on to ask for clarification about the Masterplan 2.0 process, how it relates to the BOEM process, and what the timeline for development looks like. Stakeholders also raised concerns that New York State is considering development in Federal waters to meet state clean energy goals and is not adequately considering near shore developments that would have significantly less impacts on commercial fisheries.

- NYSERDA responded that Master Plan 2.0 is intended as a planning process to make recommendations to BOEM, informed by all of the component studies and conversations with stakeholders about how further OSW could be developed in a way that balances priorities related to cost, environmentally responsible development, and a timeline to meet clean energy goals. There are known data gaps that need to be addressed as soon as possible, and Master Plan 2.0 is intended to jump start the conversations and studies that need to happen to address these gaps. The next lease auction is anticipated for 2027 or 2028, so the Masterplan 2.0 process is meant to frontload most of the research and data gathering efforts that need to be completed ahead of OSW development.

Fisheries Within the AoA

Tetra Tech provided an overview of the synthesis of research which shows known potential target fisheries within the AoA, and the types of fishing equipment used in the AoA. The data is from the Northeast Ocean Data Portal, input on Masterplan 2.0 provided by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and comments from the proposed Hudson Canyon Sanctuary. This is a high-level summary with a detailed study of the fisheries in the AoA that will be completed as part of Masterplan 2.0. Tetra Tech asked if participants would like to include any additional fisheries or gear-types in this list.

- The red crab fishery is not included on this list but could be impacted by development.

Synthesis of Comments

Tetra Tech provided an overview of a synthesis of existing comments from a variety of prior OSW efforts across a range of geographic areas. Comments from other geographic areas, like the Gulf of Maine and the West Coast, were included to identify broad environmental concerns associated with floating OSW. 57 comments were reviewed, and all comments were from fishing industry representatives. The comments were grouped into 19 broad 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 (an annual band of cooler bottom water created by thermal stratification that facilitates the distribution of many species).
- Concerns about impacts of OSW on the Frank R. Lautenberg Deep-Sea Coral Protection Area and the Georges Bank Coral Protection Area, which are substantial portions of Zones 2 and 3.

- 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.

Some of the most common identified concerns across the 57 comments related to:

- Transit, which included comments focused on establishing routes specifically for vessels to transit through OSW lease areas.
- Navigational Safety, which included comments focused on the feasibility of vessels to safely navigate through a development area.
- Excluded fisheries, which included comments focused on the potential of deep water OSW infrastructure to effectively exclude fisheries from operating in development areas.
- Infrastructure hazards, which included comments related to any operational safety concerns related to deep water OSW infrastructure.
- Inter-array cable depth, which included comments related to the need to determine the depths of inter-array cables to ensure consistency across the windfarm grid.
- Upwelling, which included comments specifically related to upwelling impacts.
- Oceanographic processes, which included comments related to a broad range of oceanographic processes.

Summary of Questions and Discussions

Tetra Tech, NYSERDA, and participants discussed the synthesis of comments, including any themes that are missing, or questions regarding the relative importance of each comment theme.

Participants asked about the organizations that provided the comments on deep water OSW that were assessed and raised concerns that Mid-Atlantic groups seem to be underrepresented. A participant also asked if NMFS provided any feedback about impact on fisheries in addition to their other concerns.

- Tetra Tech responded that the synthesis of the comments is intended to capture broad concerns about deep water OSW and pulls feedback from previous comment periods. It is unknown why some organizations provided feedback while others didn't.
- The NMFS comments specifically identified were part of an informal comment process and included feedback NMFS had about potential information gaps that Masterplan 2.0 should address. NMFS did identify fisheries of concern that were included on the list of potential target fisheries in the AoA.

A participant raised concerns about the impacts of deep water OSW development on the upwelling process. Upwelling occurs in ocean canyon areas when wind pushes surface water, prompting cooler water to rise. Upwelling is an oceanographic process that is essential for aquatic species and ecosystems. The placement of OSW platforms on or near these areas could have significant impacts on this process, and on fishery health.

- NYSERDA and Tetra Tech responded that this analysis will incorporate information from other deep water OSW developments on the West Coast, which will inform understandings of how these installations can impact essential oceanographic processes like upwelling.

Feedback from First Office Hour Meeting

Tetra Tech provided an overview of the feedback received during the first office hour meeting held on June 1, 2023, and discussed how this has been incorporated in the Masterplan 2.0 process. The main areas of feedback from the first office hour meeting included:

- The comment categories identified in the synthesis of comments are all relevant and do not need to be ranked against each other.
- The NOAA Proposed Hudson Canyon Sanctuary comments should be reviewed.
    - These comments were reviewed and included.
- Impacts on larval transport need to be explicitly considered due to the importance of this process on fishery health.
    - This has been added as a separate concern to be explored.
- The impacts on multiple oceanographic processes and interrelated effects.
    - This has been emphasized in the analysis.
- Comments from the New York Bight process should be considered.
    - These were included in the review and were found to relate to issues of larval transport, transit corridors, navigational safety, impacts on radar, and excluded fisheries.
- The importance of understanding how floating technology will have different impacts than fixed OSW infrastructure.
    - This has been emphasized in the analysis.

Summary of Closing Questions and Discussions

Tetra Tech, NYSERDA and stakeholders discussed other projects that should be highlighted in this process. Tetra Tech provided examples of previous workstreams that could be emulated in the future as part of Master Plan 2.0.

A participant asked if the next state of the science study will include areas in the Central Atlantic.

- NYSERDA is unsure what the main focus of the state of the science symposium will be, as it is still under development. NYSERDA appreciates that there are several simultaneous efforts to assess deep water OSW, and the uncertainty about the details of each effort is something that will be communicated.

A stakeholder raised concerns that the Transit Lane Workshop associated with the New England OSW developments was not sufficient and it should not be emulated. This workshop process took considerable time and resources and ultimately had no impact on establishing transit lanes. If there is no room for the consideration of transit lanes, there is no reason to hold a related workshop. A stakeholder clarified that the Transit Lane Workshop associated with the New York Bight developments was a more productive exercise. Stakeholders also stressed that impacts on transit through floating wind grids is concerning for fishing interests given the size of the installations and the presence of fisheries within the AoA.

- NYSERDA agreed that the Transit Lane Workshop associated with the New England OSW developments is not a model that should be followed. NYSERDA has worked to improve on this effort when engaging stakeholders about transit lanes in the New York Bight and will continue to do so as part of the Masterplan 2.0 process. The importance of understanding the potential

impacts of deep water OSW impacts on the transit of fishing vessels in the AoA is deeply appreciated and is one of the main themes of concern.

Participants brought up concerns regarding the scallop fishing industry. Scallop fishing is heavily area-dependent and could be severely impacted by area exclusions. Scallop grounds in Zone 1 that have previously been ruled out by BOEM in past conversations are a part of the identified AoA. Considerable time and resources were expended as part of these efforts, and it is frustrating that these areas are included in the AoA. Scallop grounds are also increasingly found at deeper depths than previously thought, so there may be concerns about impacts on scallop fishing within Zone 2 as well. The scallop fishing industry has also encountered more clapper scallops following seismic surveys, which should be explored further.

- Tetra Tech and NYSERDA appreciates this feedback and stressed that Masterplan 2.0 is intended to capture all of the conversations and studies on areas that were previously considered and excluded as part of other processes. It will provide one complete overview that compiles all of this data and information, informing the recommendations made to BOEM. Tetra Tech will incorporate the scallop industry feedback from previous OSW development comment periods in future research and analysis.

Stakeholders and Tetra Tech discussed the boundaries of the proposed Hudson Canyon Marine Sanctuary. The final boundary that is determined will have a great impact on what areas are available for OSW development. It will be challenging to figure out how to get energy from deep water OSW back to shore around areas of exclusion, like the proposed Hudson Canyon Marine Sanctuary. Master Plan 2.0 will inform the conversations about these issues that will be held in greater detail as considerations about development continue.

- Masterplan 2.0 includes an analysis of depth and cost for OSW, which will address some of these questions about the relationship between potential areas for OSW development and areas of exclusion.

Participants asked why New York State is not considering areas closer to shore for OSW development, which would have considerably less impacts on fisheries, and expressed concern that impacts on viewshed are being considered with more weight than impacts on fishing interests.

- Masterplan 1.0 identified visibility, environmental, and transit concerns that impact decisions about nearshore OSW development. Masterplan 2.0 will provide a synthesis of fishing industry and other concerns about deep water OSW that will inform the overall conversation about how, and where, to develop OSW that balances cost, environmental/industry concerns, and the timeline for the development of clean energy.

Participants discussed recreational fishing interests and concerns regarding OSW development. Recreational fishing representatives largely anticipate benefits from the development of OSW platforms, and there is broad support for these efforts. It is important to note that the type of mooring system used by deep water OSW could heavily impact support from fishing interests. There are also some concerns among the recreational industry regarding the danger for collisions with the platforms. In addition, there are significant concerns that installations will impact radar navigation, and considerable interest in the potential to install cell receivers on OSW infrastructure to extend cell service at sea.

The commercial long line fishing industry has considerable concerns about deep water OSW development. The Bluewater Fishermen's Association should be contacted for additional information. Alan Weiss operates the Bluewater Fishing Tackle Company Pennsylvania, is a respected contact associated with the longline fishing community in the mid-Atlantic area, and should be contacted for further input.

Stakeholders provided a final overview of the comment themes identified in the synthesis of the comments. Participants agreed that all of the highlighted comment themes were critical, and many are interrelated. It is essential to understand the ways in which the potential deep water OSW infrastructure could exclude fisheries from operating in and around areas of development.

- This feedback is appreciated and will be incorporated into further ongoing research and data gathering. The stakeholders in the longline fishing community are encouraged to join the office hour meetings to ask questions, voice concerns, and engage in the Master Plan 2.0 process.

Next Steps

- Tetra Tech will continue with their Master Plan 2.0 Fisheries Engagement Approach and will continue to hold facilitated monthly listening sessions and informal office hours for F-TWG fishing representatives and other fishing industry stakeholders.
- Tetra Tech will incorporate the feedback and input from this meeting into ongoing research and data gathering efforts.
- The next (3rd of 4) office hour meeting will be held on July 17th, 2023, from 5:00 – 7:00pm (EDT).