



NOAA

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North Atlantic Region

Responding with a Single Voice on Offshore Renewable Energy Leases

NOAA's regional collaboration efforts break down institutional silos allowing us to work better together. Here's a real world example of how the North Atlantic team is driving integration across NOAA.

What's the issue?

There's growing interest among energy companies in developing the offshore waters – and winds – of the North Atlantic. The Department of Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, or BOEM, is responsible for issuing these offshore wind energy leases. As part of the permitting process, each prospective lessee must examine the potential environmental impacts.



Of course, NOAA has a seat at this table as well since any offshore development may have impacts on the living marine resources for which NOAA has responsibility. NOAA's expertise in a range of disciplines – physical and biological science, resource assessment, and economics – means NOAA is well positioned to understand how offshore renewable energy projects may affect coastal ecosystems.

It's not surprising then that back in 2010, BOEM's Dr. Mary Boatman reached out to a number of different individuals in NOAA asking for help identifying the science and research needs to assess potential impacts of offshore wind development in North Atlantic waters.

What would be a typical response?

In the past, such a request to multiple line offices likely would have elicited a number of varying, sometimes conflicting responses from each line office. Without a mechanism to coordinate answers and activities, there would be no single NOAA response and as a result, the outcomes might not reflect NOAA's most strategically important needs.

What happened this time?

What happened this time was actually something quite different. Jenni Samson from NOAA Fisheries Northeast Fisheries Science Center and Sue Tuxbury from NOAA Fisheries Northeast Regional Office got to know each other through their work on the North Atlantic Regional Team's Ocean Uses subteam. During a subteam call back in 2010, they learned BOEM was talking with a number of NOAA line offices, but most line offices were unaware how each other was interacting with BOEM. Further, it was likely the most appropriate NOAA personnel were unaware of or not participating in the review of the BOEM process. They saw an opportunity for collaboration.

Jenni and Sue are currently leading a NART effort to identify appropriate NOAA line office contacts with the interest and expertise that would be beneficial for NOAA's review of the offshore wind leasing process. Over the next couple of weeks, they'll begin reaching out to these contacts across NOAA Fisheries, the National Ocean Service, and even the National Weather Service to open lines of communication and share information and perspectives. The foundation that Jenni and Sue created through the North Atlantic Regional Team will enable ongoing coordination and a consistent agency-wide response.

What's the payoff?

We now know that the comments we provide to BOEM will be consistent with what NOAA wants and reflects the myriad expertise and perspectives of the individual lines. In a broader sense, we can see how collaboration helps us work smarter, faster, and more strategically.

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