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New Capacity to Support Wildlife & Offshore Wind Science

Regional Wildlife Science Entity to focus on research and monitoring for wildlife and offshore wind energy

Three ocean planning groups are taking on management of a scientific collaboration focused on how offshore wind energy development will affect wildlife and ecosystems.

The new Regional Wildlife Science Entity (RWSE) today announced it will support regional planning, coordination, and collaboration on research and monitoring for wildlife and offshore wind energy.

Administered and directed by the [Northeast Regional Ocean Council](#) (NROC), [Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean](#) (MARCO), and the [Coastal States Stewardship Foundation](#) (CSSF), RWSE aims to create an essential forum for sharing information, standardizing data collection and monitoring protocols, defining key scientific research needs at project and regional scales, and amplifying the results of existing and ongoing research. Read more about the RWSE concept [here](#).

"As the representatives of NROC, MARCO, and CSSF, we jointly express enthusiasm for the selection of our partnerships to administer and direct the RWSE and we look forward to building on our existing work with partners and stakeholders along the Atlantic coast to further the goals of coordinated research on marine wildlife and offshore wind," said **Lisa Berry Engler, NROC State Co-Chair, Kimberly Cole, MARCO Management Board Chair, and Gwynne Schultz, President of the CSSF Board.**

NROC and MARCO are the Regional Ocean Partnerships on the U.S. Atlantic coast, and have convened government agencies, industry, environmental groups, researchers, and others around shared priorities for ocean planning and management for more than a decade. In particular, NROC's and MARCO's work to identify and address data and science needs, including for marine wildlife and offshore wind, through the Northeast Ocean Data Portal and Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal, lays the foundation for advancing the objectives of the RWSE.

Their role in executing the mission of the RWSE will be guided by a Steering Committee and coordinated with other regional organizations including the Responsible Offshore Science Alliance, Northeastern Regional Association of Coastal Ocean Observing Systems and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Association of Coastal Ocean Observing Systems. Since 2019, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, and a broad set of stakeholders developed a vision for a regional science organization to support research and monitoring for wildlife and offshore wind energy.

Doreen M. Harris, President and CEO, NYSERDA said, "NYSERDA is proud to have worked with MassCEC and other state, federal, non-governmental and industry partners in developing the Regional Wildlife Science Entity. This collective effort ensures regional coordination that maximizes valuable environmental data and helps drive the renewable energy industry to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a thoughtful and scientific manner that minimizes potential wildlife impacts. As New York State moves forward with achieving its clean energy and climate change goals, the State is committed to advancing offshore wind development both cost-effectively and responsibly and will certainly look to the Regional Wildlife Science Entity to help inform this critical work."

Representatives from federal agencies, state agencies, offshore wind developers and non-governmental organizations will guide the future work of the RWSE via participation in the Steering Committee. The committee will leverage the expertise of these entities, many of which are already involved in a host of studies to evaluate potential effects of offshore wind development on wildlife and ecosystems. Scientific and technical experts throughout the region will also be invited to provide input on topics such as research priorities, monitoring methods, interpretation of results, and data management.

"Science-based decision making is essential to all of BOEM's programs," **said BOEM Director Amanda Lefton**. "As part of responsible offshore wind development, we look forward to playing a leading role in advancing ocean science and participating in this landmark effort between regional ocean partnerships to enhance our understanding of marine wildlife."

"America's offshore wind energy future depends on states, federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and offshore wind developers uniting under a common goal. We need to come together and use science-based decision making to safeguard our marine life and supporting ecosystems while developing offshore wind energy," **said Janet Coit, assistant administrator for fisheries**. "NOAA Fisheries is pleased to be a part of this scientific endeavor to promote regional coordination to ensure our wildlife continues to thrive."

"Maryland is committed to advancing research that explores the relationship between offshore wind development and marine life, habitats, and ecosystems," **said Mary Beth Tung, Ph.D., Esq., Director of the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA)**. "MEA is encouraged by the creation of the RWSE and looks forward to working across the region with this group and its stakeholders to identify ways to implement clean energy in the marine environment while eliminating or minimizing any impacts to the marine environment."

Laura Morales, Head of Permitting-New York for Equinor, and Ruth Perry, Business Environment Advisor for Shell, on behalf of the RWSE Offshore Wind Developers' Caucus said, "We are officially launching this regional network to effectively conduct and coordinate regional monitoring and research that supports the advancement of responsible offshore wind development. This is the result of dedicated work and collaboration among federal and state agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and offshore wind developers -- representing an approach that combines resources and increases transparency. This will help ensure we continue developing this industry to avoid or minimize impacts to wildlife while meeting critical climate goals and advancing the energy infrastructure in coastal states."

"National Wildlife Federation strongly supports the responsible development of offshore wind energy as a critical climate change solution, and timely, regional scale research on key wildlife species and habitats is essential for making it happen," **said Catherine Bowes**,

offshore wind energy program director at the National Wildlife Federation. "We greatly appreciate the hard work and commitment of our federal, state, and industry partners, as well as fellow environmental representatives **Natural Resources Defense Council and National Audubon Society**, that have served on the Steering Committee and led this effort from vision to reality. We look forward to continuing our important work together in the years ahead to prioritize and advance research needed to ensure all offshore wind projects are developed responsibly with strong protections for wildlife and communities every step of the way."

"We are excited to see the evolution of the RWSE and applaud this significant step in moving the entity forward," **said Kris Ohleth, Executive Director of the Special Initiative on Offshore Wind.**

"RWSE will support collaboration and cooperation towards ocean coexistence, all supported by the best available science. That is exactly the approach needed to continue to move the offshore wind sector forward in a timely and responsible way."

RWSE is funded by annual contributions and support from members in each of the four sectors—federal, state, industry, and nongovernmental organization—as well as significant in-kind support from NROC, MARCO, CSSF, and their partners and stakeholders.

For more information, please contact the RWSE Director, [Emily Shumchenia, PhD](#)

RWSE Interim Steering Committee Member Organizations

- Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
- Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
- Equinor
- Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
- Maryland Energy Administration
- Massachusetts Clean Energy Center
- National Audubon Society
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- National Wildlife Federation
- Natural Resources Defense Council
- New York State Energy Research Development Authority
- Shell