

**Mariners' Advisory
Committee**
for the Bay & River Delaware

Captain J. Stuart Griffin, Chairman
Captain Michael Nesbitt, Secretary

Organized 1964

Captain Rick Iulucci, Treasurer
Captain Joseph F. Bradley, Honorary Chairman



May 17, 2018

Office of Renewable Energy Programs
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
45600 Woodland Road, VAM-OREP
Sterling, VA 20166

**Re: Comments on Request for Feedback on BOEM's Proposed Path
Forward for Future Offshore Renewable Energy Leasing on the Atlantic
Outer Continental Shelf [Docket No. BOEM-2018-0018]**

Dear Mr. Cruickshank:

The Mariners' Advisory Committee for the Bay & River Delaware (MAC) is the Harbor Safety Committee for the ports on the Delaware River. Formed in 1964, it is comprised of Master Mariners, Pilots, and other maritime professionals and concerns itself with safety of navigation, with particular regard to large ocean going vessels. The MAC works closely with the U.S. Coast Guard, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, commercial vessel and terminal operators, and port industry personnel to recommend and promote safe navigation practices on the Delaware Bay and River, as well as the approaches to this very important waterway. We also participate on other local, regional and national committees related to safe navigation and port security such as the federally mandated Area Committee, a committee of local stakeholders responsible for environmental disaster recovery, the Marine Transportation System Recovery Unit (MTSRU) responsible for getting the port up and running after such an event, and the Area Maritime Security Committee (AMSC) responsible for enhancing the security of our port system.

The Mariners' Advisory Committee supports the development of offshore wind energy along the Atlantic Coast when it does not impact or restrict maritime commerce or commercial navigation within the federal channels into the

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Delaware Bay and River, the traffic separation scheme entering the Delaware from sea, the Atlantic Ocean traditional deep-draft maritime safety corridors as well as projected high-density maritime traffic routes. Specifically, we are extremely concerned that traditional and projected high-density maritime traffic routes such as those defined in *Atlantic Coast Port Access Route Study Final Report* (USCG-2011-0351) *Appendix VII*, including those outside official marine vessel traffic routing measures and traffic separation schemes, are not considered as part of the Maritime Navigation Conflict Area exclusionary factor. In addition to the TSS delineated on the chart, these historic routes must be areas on the OCS that are removed by BOEM to ensure navigation safety of maritime commerce into the approaches of respective east coast ports.

We concur with BOEM's three exclusionary factors of OCSLA Prohibited Areas, DOD Conflict Areas and Maritime Navigation Conflict Areas. However, BOEM indicates they will not address marine vessel traffic information (automated identification System- AIS) or further delineate areas of high traffic use outside of official traffic separation schemes until later in the Area identification process. The MAC has concerns with this approach and request BOEM further analyze and add into the Maritime Navigation Conflict Area exclusionary factor the traditional high-density maritime traffic routes outlined in Appendix VII to the Atlantic Coast Port Access Route Study (ACPARS). These traditional high-density maritime traffic routes for the entire east coast need to be addressed ahead of time and prior to the OREI Area identification process to ensure the protection of our national security and economic security interests. Otherwise, the potential impacts to navigation safety of both national defense assets and maritime commercial ships transiting along the U.S. Atlantic coast will be severely impacted due to converging of crossing and transit routes that will mix vessel types, increase vessel density from a funneling effect, cause more complex vessel interactions and, ultimately, increase the risk of collisions. The potential for only one collision at sea must be prevented to ensure there is no significant loss of life, property and/or environmental damage. Additionally, evaluating the cumulative impacts of adjacent wind development areas is vital in understanding the cascading effect of how one wind development area may change routes and approaches to the next port or the next wind development area. A holistic approach to wind energy areas and routing measures along the eastern seaboard is of the utmost importance.

The Ports and Waterway Safety Act (33 U.S.C. § 1223(c)) authorizes the Coast Guard to designate shipping safety fairways to allow vessels an area free of fixed offshore structures for safe access to U.S. ports. To help mitigate the navigation safety risks between OREI and vessels transiting along the east coast and into the port approaches of MTS, the Coast Guard is going to

move forward with a Federal Register Call for Information to receive public comment on the initiative to convert these traditional high-density maritime traffic routes into shipping safety fairways.

It is critical to resolve these issues prior to Area identification to ensure transparency with all entities. The Coast Guard has taken steps to work collaboratively with BOEM to ensure this process addresses these concerns by offering to convene regional maritime safety meetings with BOEM to discuss how to balance competing interests in an increasingly complex maritime environment. We enthusiastically endorse such an approach.

Due to the diverse mix of commercial vessel types entering and exiting the Delaware Bay and the often hazardous nature of their cargos, including fully laden crude oil tankers, ultra large container vessels, and liquefied gas carriers we expressly request a minimum buffer of two nautical miles from the edge of sea lanes/fairways to any fixed structures in proposed wind energy areas. This buffer should be larger near the terminus of lanes to account for the complex traffic scenarios that can occur there. These buffer recommendations echo those which are spelled out in the ACPARS Marine Planning Guidelines (Enclosure 2).

Other holistic planning strategies should be utilized when determining the path forward for the US East Coast such as the creation of official near shore (coastwise) tug and barge safety fairways, creation of designated offshore anchorages near approaches to Ports, and protection of access to Port approaches in consideration of potential future eastward expansion of Wind Energy Areas.

The Mariners' Advisory Committee stands ready to engage further on any topics regarding planned and future Wind Energy Area development. We will continue to participate in the dialog and offer local perspective and input whenever possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Request for Feedback.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Stuart Griffin', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Captain J. Stuart Griffin
Chairman