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## Recreation and Tourism and Offshore Renewable Energy

### *Potential effects of offshore renewable energy on recreational and tourism activities* **(To be included in Chapter 8 Renewable Energy)**

1. The potential effects of offshore renewable energy on recreational and tourism activities are not well understood given the relatively recent occurrence of offshore renewable energy. Effects may be negative, resulting in impacts on recreation and tourism uses, or may be positive, resulting in enhancements to these activities.
2. In the 2007 “Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Alternative Energy Development and Production” (PEIS), the U.S. Department of Interior Minerals Management Service (MMS) indicated that offshore renewable energy installations might have visual impacts on marine recreational users and coastal tourists, though this depends on the location and visibility of the structures, as well as the preferences of the individual. Visual impacts may be caused by the offshore structures themselves, as well as the sights of support vessels, construction equipment, and helicopters traveling to and from offshore facilities, which may impact cruise ship tourists, coastal tourists, beach users, and recreational boaters. Such impacts could result in the reduction of tourism or recreational activity within sight of the project area (Lilley et al 2009). MMS cites no evidence of such impacts in other locations with offshore renewable facilities and indicates that such impacts, if any, are expected to be minor (Minerals Management Service 2007).
3. Alternatively, the PEIS also indicates that offshore renewable energy structures may enhance marine recreational and tourism activities by becoming an attraction that recreational boaters, charter boat clients, cruise ship passengers, and other visitors may want to visit (Minerals Management Service 2007). A 2007 University of Delaware study found that 65.8% of surveyed out-of-state tourists were likely to visit a beach in order to see a wind farm offshore, and 44.5% were likely to pay to take a boat tour of an offshore wind facility (Lilley et al 2009). Anecdotal data provided by a 2006 British Wind Energy Association study indicates several instances in which tourism increased at UK destinations adjacent to offshore wind farms, or where surveyed tourists indicated that the wind farm had no effect on their likelihood to visit the site (British Wind Energy Association 2006). Visitor centers have been developed at some of these sites to facilitate tourists’ experience (British Wind Energy Association 2006).
4. Noise associated with on-site marine construction, or traffic noise from support vessels and helicopters traveling to and from the offshore facility, may have a potential impact on coastal tourists and marine recreational users. Such impacts could result in the reduction of tourism or recreational activity within the affected area. In the PEIS, MMS cites no evidence of such impacts in other locations with offshore renewable facilities and indicates that such impacts, if any, are expected to be minor (Minerals Management Service 2007).
5. The construction and operation of offshore renewable energy facilities may result in short- or long-term displacement of marine recreational users, particularly recreational

boaters. The construction phase may result in temporary closures of the offshore project area and/or adjacent shoreline areas during activities such as driving piles or installing transmission cables. Though less likely, the operation phase may also result in the long-term displacement of recreational users from all or part of the project area. Such temporary or long-term closures could alter recreational activities and use patterns within the SAMP area by lengthening transit times between destinations, displacing fishing activities conducted by income-generating charter boat operations, or displacing large-scale sailboat races that rely on the use of the project area. Such a displacement could also cause individual users or entire events to relocate, resulting in increased recreational activity in other in-state or out-of-state locations (Minerals Management Service 2007; Royal Yachting Association and the Cruising Association 2004). In the PEIS, MMS indicates that such impacts, if any, are expected to be minor (Minerals Management Service 2007). It should also be noted that enforcing access restrictions around an offshore renewable energy facility may be very difficult given the offshore location.

6. The construction and operation of offshore renewable energy facilities may impact navigation and marine safety for recreational boaters in and around the project area. Alternatively, offshore facilities may provide enhancements to navigation and marine safety by providing mariners access to offshore weather data. Such impacts, enhancements, and mitigation measures are discussed at length in *Chapter 7, Marine Transportation, Navigation, and Infrastructure*.
7. Some of the recreational uses discussed in this chapter rely on the presence and visibility of marine and avian species including fish, whales, sharks, and birds. Offshore renewable energy facilities may have some impacts on these species and/or the habitats on which they rely. Alternatively, additional structure provided by offshore renewable energy structures may add to habitat complexity and increase biodiversity within the immediate area, attracting more fish, birds, whales and sharks, thereby improving recreational activities that rely on these species. Such impacts, enhancements, and related mitigation measures are discussed at length in *Chapter 2, Ecology of the SAMP Area*, and *Chapter 5, Marine Mammals and Other Wildlife*.
8. If offshore renewable energy development results in a reduction in marine recreation and tourism in the SAMP area, Rhode Island-based businesses that serve these industries may lose some business. Alternatively, marine trades and coastal tourism businesses may benefit from offshore renewable energy in response to the potential growth of marine and coastal tourism activities such as wind farm boat trips (Ospar Commission 2004) (see above). In addition the construction and operation of an offshore facility may require additional shore-based infrastructure or services that may boost the marine trades sector.

**Works Cited:**

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