

Environmental Studies Program: Ongoing Studies

Study Area(s): North, Mid-, and South Atlantic

Administered By: Office of Renewable Energy Programs

Title: Real-time Opportunity for Development Environmental Observations (RODEO)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: BOEM is responsible for the approval of a construction and operations plan submitted by developers for wind facilities on the Outer Continental Shelf. The approval process includes the analysis of the environmental effects from the construction, operation, and decommissioning of these facilities. Real-time measurements of the construction and operation of the first facilities to be built will allow for more accurate assessments of the actual environmental effects. Without real time observations of the activities, best estimates based on perceived activities are used to make these determinations.

Total Cost: \$60,000 (task 1)
\$390,445 (task 2)
\$955,176 (task 3)
\$45,447 (task 4)
\$336,948 (task 5)
\$1,180,327 (task 6)
\$750,000 (task 7)
\$394,416 (task 8)
\$699,948 (task 9)

Period of Performance: FY 2015-2019

Conducting Organization(s): HDR Environmental, Operations and Construction, Inc.

BOEM Contact: [Mary Boatman](#)

Description:

Background: The construction of the first turbine in the offshore environment offers an opportunity to address many of the environmental questions that are of concern to the public. Many Federal agencies have mandates to protect the environment and will need to know more precisely what wind development will involve. Through a collaborative effort with other Federal and state agencies, the construction and operation of offshore wind turbines can be studied to gain insight into the actual disturbances to the environment. Without these real-time observations, analyses are based on best guesses and scenarios that are conservative.

Analyses of the environmental consequences require knowledge or estimates of the duration and extent of the activity. For example, the extent of disturbance on the seafloor from anchors may be estimated to encompass a larger area than actually occurs. Vessels may use dynamic positioning, resulting in no disturbance from anchoring. An analyst relies on the best available information and assumptions about the activities based on previous experience. For offshore wind development, there is no previous experience, so the analyses and subsequent mitigation measures are based on an educated guess. These analyses would benefit from real-time, independent observations during actual construction activities.

The example of anchoring is only on aspect that is estimated. A full environmental analysis includes estimates of air emissions, sound produced by the activities, sea floor disturbance by cabling, and potential discharges from vessels, to name a few. The duration of these activities is also included in the analysis. Better estimates of these activities will result in more realistic mitigation measures that appropriately reduce or eliminate the impacts. Without accurate information, developers may be required to take measures that are ineffectual. In addition to actual measurements, mitigation methodologies and testing of monitoring equipment is included in the contract.

Following are the topics that this study, through a single or series of task orders, may address.

Assessment of sound environment during construction

- Evaluate pre-existing ambient noise levels associated with the project site prior to development.
- Evaluate the characteristics of sound (intensity, duration, and frequency) generated during construction activities, such as pile driving and cable laying.
- Evaluate the most effective scales (temporal and spatial) at which to measure a representative sample of construction and operation noise.
- Evaluate the level of sound created by the increase in vessel traffic during construction and operation periods.
- Evaluate the levels of sound generated and propagated during operations.
- Evaluate devices or technology for reducing sound levels during construction activities.

Evaluation of visual activities during and after construction

- Evaluate the visibility of activities from shore, both during the day and at night.
- Evaluate the types of lighting used and what can be seen from shore during both day and night.
- Evaluate how meteorological conditions affect visibility from shore.

Evaluation of air quality emission sources from construction activities

- Monitor how many ships and/or aircraft are used for construction of offshore wind energy facilities, including duration at the site, transit times, number of trips and other relevant parameters to evaluate the air and water emissions.
- Monitor how many ships and/or aircraft are used for initial operations of offshore wind energy facilities, including duration at the site, transit times, number of trips and other relevant parameters to evaluate the air and water emissions.
- Record the types of ships (e.g. jack-up rig) and/or aircraft (e.g. helicopter) used and estimate the emissions based on engine type, associated equipment, and other relevant factors, including duration of activities.

Evaluation of sediment disturbance and recovery

- Record the anchor patterns for vessels and floating offshore wind turbines, if appropriate.
- Observe and record scarring from the anchor chains.
- Evaluate the recovery time for scarring from anchor chains and record relevant parameters such as sediment type, local currents.
- Record the extent of disturbance during cable laying, if possible repeat for different installation methods, include the ship type, sediment type, burial depth, current speeds, and other parameters important for evaluating disturbance and recovery.
- Record the duration of cable laying, and if possible, for different installation methods, include relevant parameters for comparison.
- Evaluate the recovery time for the seafloor from cable laying, if possible, from different installation methods.
- Monitor before and after a major storm event to evaluate changes in cable burial depth.

- Monitor near wind energy structures for sediment erosion, at the base and at coarser scales, including sediment type, local currents, other parameters needed to evaluate local and regional scour.

Effects of mitigating measures or abatement measures

Evaluate the reduction or elimination of impact producing factors through the use of abatement or mitigation measures. For example, this task will involve close cooperation with the operator and may or may not be feasible.

Evaluate monitoring technologies or techniques

Evaluate equipment or technologies that may be used to monitor or measure impact producing factors or effects on receptors. The following are potential topics for evaluation, which may be requested in a task order or task orders:

- Evaluate the efficacy of monitoring technologies and techniques that may be deployed at these projects.
- Determine the types of observations to include within an environmental monitoring strategy.
- Evaluate types of equipment for effective monitoring that may be used to determine air quality, water quality, benthic environments, aquatic communities, sediment disturbance, wildlife, acoustics, or strike frequency.
- Evaluate the most effective and cost-effective method, or suite of methods, for detecting marine mammals during construction activities and how this method would vary by geographic region.
- Testing of monitoring methodologies during construction that may be used by industry, such as passive acoustic monitoring, to evaluate whale presence during construction activities.
- Testing of novel technologies for evaluating the environmental effects of construction and operation activities.
- Comparative testing of monitoring equipment to evaluate improved technology or methodology.

Objectives: The objective of this study is to acquire real-time observations of the construction and initial operation of wind facilities to aid the evaluation of environmental effects of future facilities.

Methods: The methods used will be dependent on the type of analyses to be performed and defined within each task order.

Task Order 1: For this task order, a field plan was prepared that described the activities to be performed during the installation of five wind turbine foundations at Block Island, Rhode Island. The field plan was used to define task orders 2 and 3.

Task Order 2: Under this task order, two scour monitors were attached to one foundation at Block Island, Rhode Island. The monitors were evaluated for their ability to observe any scour occurring by the legs of the foundation. The monitoring covered a sixteen month period. Results from this effort are included in the report for Task Order 3.

Task Order 3: For task order 3, an observer recorded the activities including the types and duration of the installation of two foundations at Block Island Wind Farm. Hydrophones, both moored and towed, measured the sound generated from pile driving. Geophysical surveys will be used to evaluate scour marks from anchoring and other bottom disturbance and the recovery. Measurements of sound from pile driving in air were made at Block Island and Point Judith. Particle motion detectors were deployed during pile driving.

Task Order 4: For the second year of this study under this task order, a field plan will be developed to cover the anticipated activities with the continuation of the installation of the wind facility at Block Island. The field plan will address the installation of cables and the completion of the construction of the five turbines.

Task Order 5: The installation of the cable between Block Island and the mainland was evaluated under this task order. The types of measurements included measuring the rate of particle settling after they are disturbed by the jet plow. The task order is complete and the final report is available: [Observing Cable Laying and Particle Settlement During the Construction of the Block Island Wind Farm](#)

Task Order 6: Under this task order, observations will be made and recorded during the installation of the tower, nacelle, and blades at two of the turbines. Acoustic measurements both in air and under water will be made during the initial operation of the wind turbines. Visual assessments will be made both during the day and at night from several locations.

Task Order 7: This task order continues the benthic monitoring and seafloor disturbance and recovery for another two years.

Task Order 8: This task order is for three additional months of underwater sound monitoring during operations.

Task Order 9: This task order is for underwater sound monitoring during the installation of a meteorological tower in the Maryland Wind Energy Area.

Current Status: Under the first task order, a field plan for measurements at the Block Island Wind Farm (BIWF) was developed. The final field plan was accepted in June 2015. Task order 2, taken from the field plan, involves the testing of scour monitoring equipment on one foundation at BIWF for up to one year and was awarded in June 2015. Task order 3 includes recording activities as they occur, monitoring of sound in air and water during pile driving, and evaluation of scour from anchors and other bottom disturbing activities. Field work for task order 3 collected measurements from the installation of the foundations at BIWF in August and September 2015. Seafloor recovery studies were conducted in May 2016, October 2016 and May 2017. Observations of cable laying were made in June 2016. Final construction of BIWF occurred August 2016 and observations were made during the construction. Additional monitoring of sound during operations is currently underway.

Final Report Due: Task Order 1: June 2015; Task Order 2: Combined with Task Order 3; Task Order 3: June 2018; Task Order 4: June 2016; Task Order 5: March 2017; Task Order 6: June 2019. Task Order 7: July 2019; Task Order 8: January 2018, results reported with Task Order 5; Task Order 9: December 2019.

Publications:

[Observing Cable Laying and Particle Settlement During the Construction of the Block Island Wind Farm](#)

Affiliated Web Sites: None.

Revised Date: April 3, 2018