

A map of the Gulf of Maine region, showing the coastline of Maine and the surrounding waters. The map is overlaid with various colored and dashed lines representing different wind energy areas and boundaries. The background is a dark blue color.

Gulf of Maine Final Wind Energy Areas

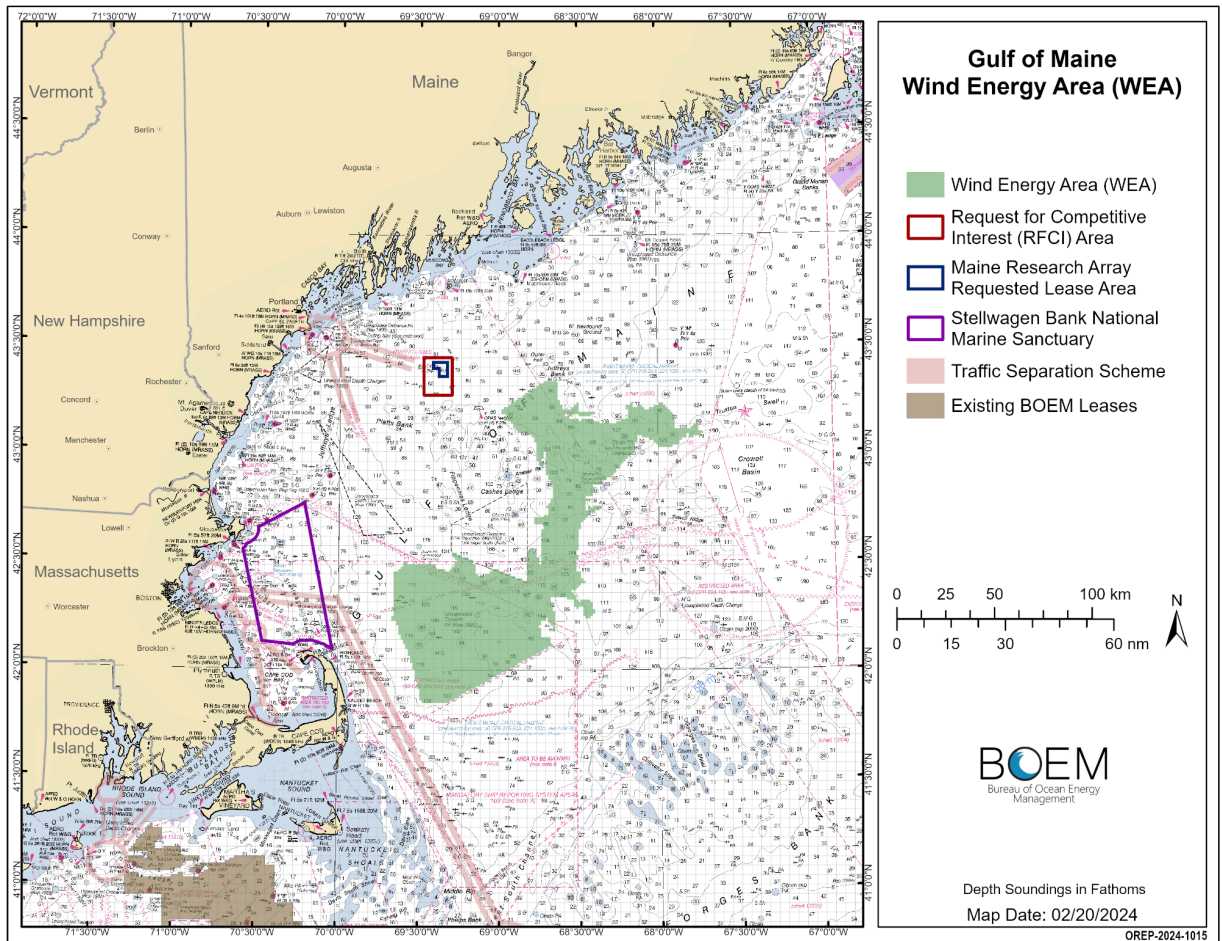
Where we are and how we got here



Gulf of Maine
Research Institute

Last updated on March 19, 2024

Final Wind Energy Area:

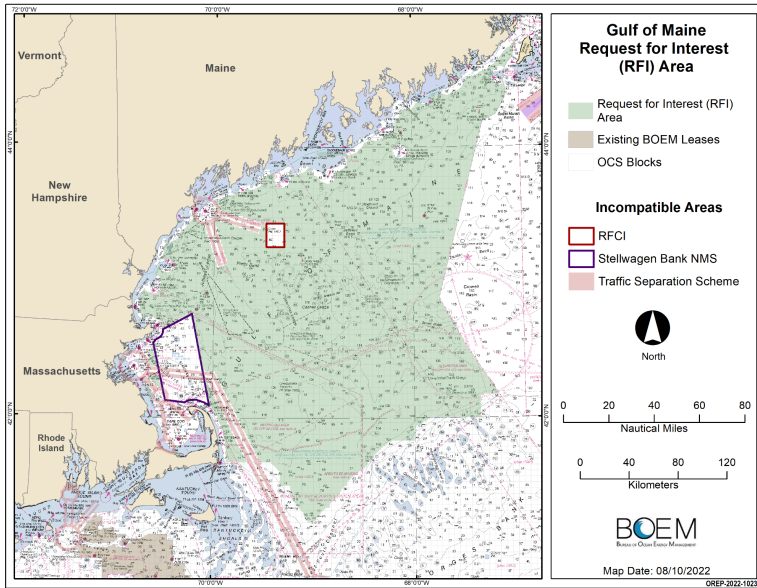


The [Final Wind Energy Area \(WEA\)](#) represents ~80% reduction from the Call Area. To get to this point, BOEM has convened and participated in over 70 external meetings focused on the Gulf of Maine with stakeholders, like fishermen, Tribal Nations, federal and state agencies and other ocean users. The resulting Final WEA avoids important areas for lobster fishing, North Atlantic right whale habitat, nesting seabirds, and other important fishing areas and habitats. Additionally, in response to initial conversations with Tribal Nations located within Maine, the Final WEA strives to avoid a majority of the historic and present fishing grounds of those Tribes. While this is progress, BOEM recognizes that additional potential conflicts remain.

The Final WEA totals about two million acres ranging from approximately 23-92 miles off the coast. The Final WEA has the potential to support generation of 32 GW of clean energy, surpassing current state goals for offshore wind energy in the Gulf of Maine: 10 GW for Massachusetts and 3 GW for Maine. Therefore, the size of the Final WEA will allow BOEM to consider additional areas to be avoided when designating lease areas, while also supporting the region's renewable energy goals. This also allows for the potential for multiple lease sales, as BOEM continues to evaluate a phased leasing approach.

Gulf of Maine Area Identification Process

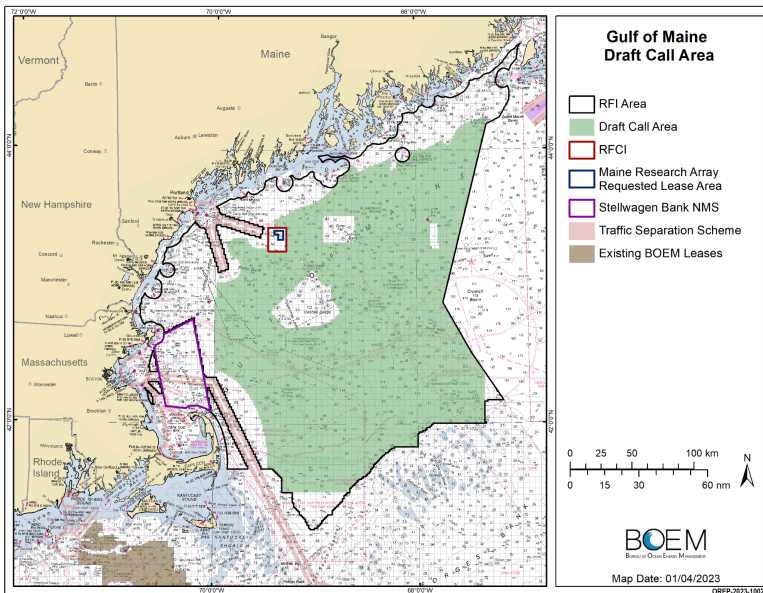
August 2022 - Request for Interest Area



13,713,825 acres

The Request for Interest (RFI) represents the broadest area of the Gulf of Maine in which BOEM received feedback. It removed Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, the traffic separation schemes and the Request for Competitive Interest Area - which now is moving forward as the Maine Research Array.

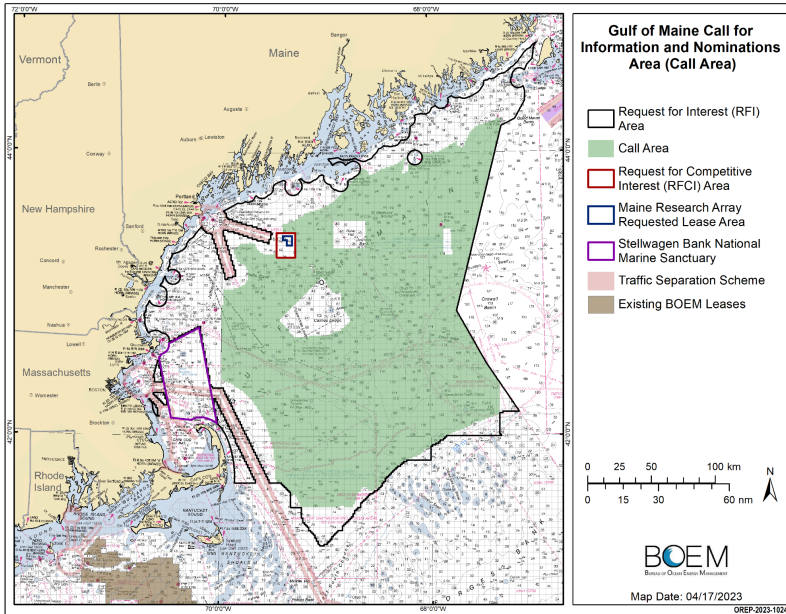
January 2023 - Draft Call Area



~9,840,000 acres

BOEM received feedback on the RFI to remove areas including: a 20nm set back from shore, Jeffreys Bank HMA, Wester Gulf of Maine Closure and HMA, Closed Area 1 North; Closed Area 2, Cashes Ledge Closure Area and HMA, Jordan Basin DHRA and Outer Scoodic Ridge CPA. The next step, the Draft Call Area, represented a 27% reduction from the RFI Area.

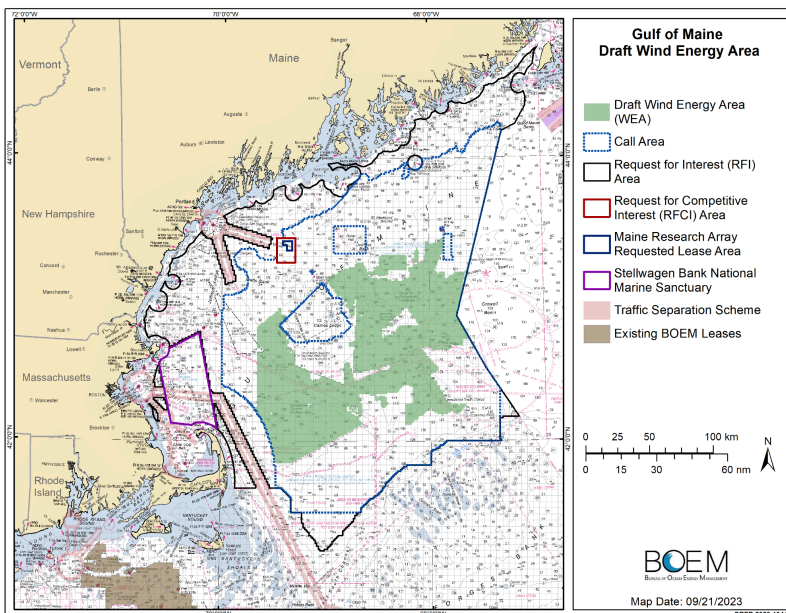
April 2023 - Final Call Area



9,804,429 acres

From the Draft Call Area to the Final Call Area, BOEM removed the southern edge to avoid Georges Bank. BOEM also asked for additional information and analysis on the North Atlantic Right Whale (NARW) Take Reduction Plan Restricted Areas, Georges Bank, Platts Bank, and Lobster Management Area (LMA) 1 to learn more about how critical fishing grounds and whale habitat may conflict with future offshore wind energy areas.

October 2023 - Draft Wind Energy Area

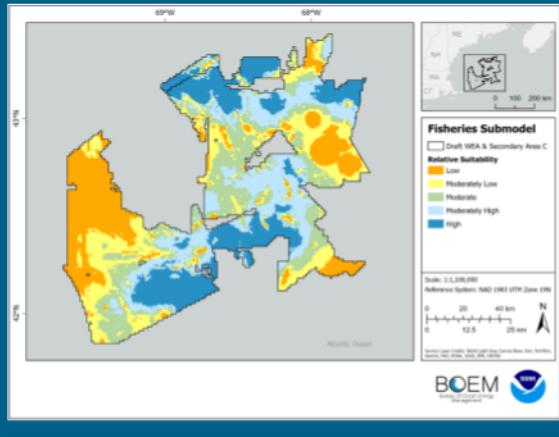


3,519,067 acres

The Draft Wind Energy Area (WEA) represents a 64% reduction from the Final Call Area. To get there, BOEM ran the [NCCOS Suitability Model](#) using data in fisheries, wind, natural and cultural resources, and industry and operations to inform the least conflicted area. The model removed and added buffers to key fishing grounds based on stakeholder input on data and other considerations.

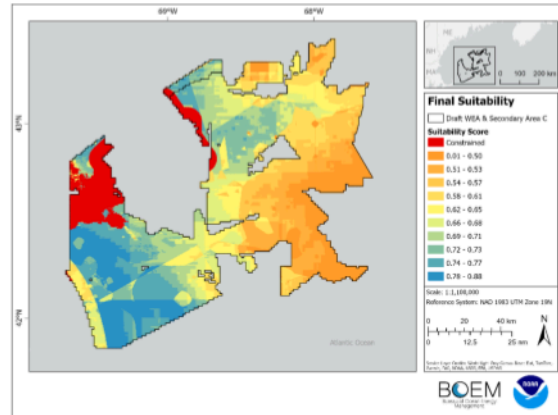
Fisheries Data Layers:
 Fishing Footprint Raster (Commercial VTR Raster), 2008 - 2021
 Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) Transits, 2012 - 2021

Fisheries Submodel

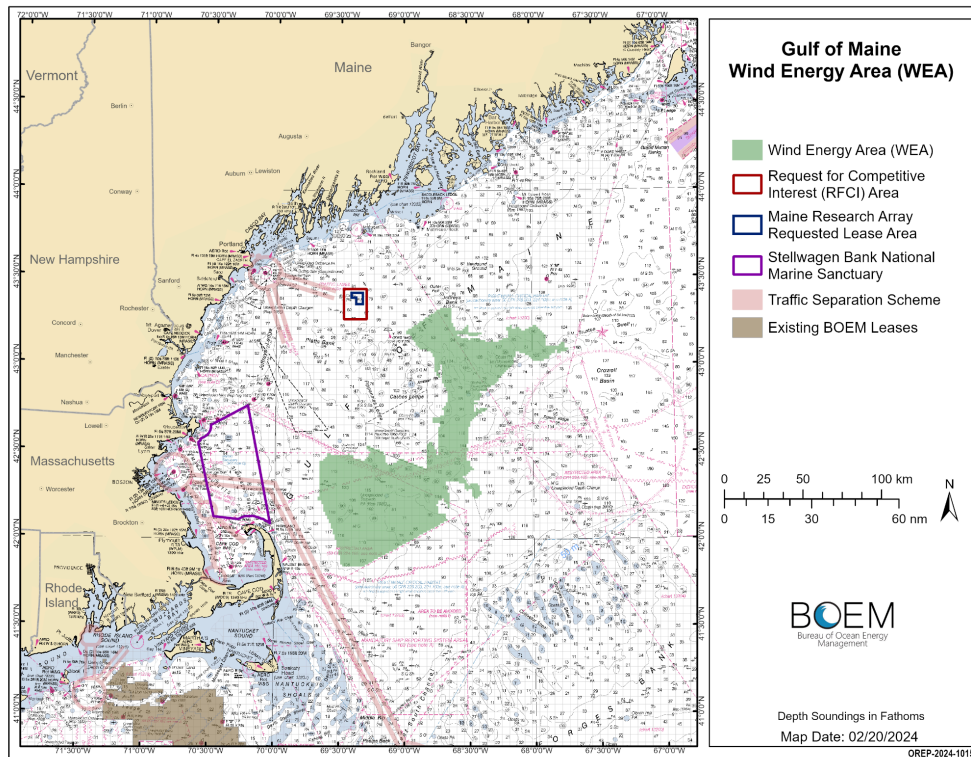


Wind Submodel
 Natural and Cultural Resources Submodel
 Industry and Operations Submodel

Final Suitability Model



March 2024 - Final Wind Energy Area



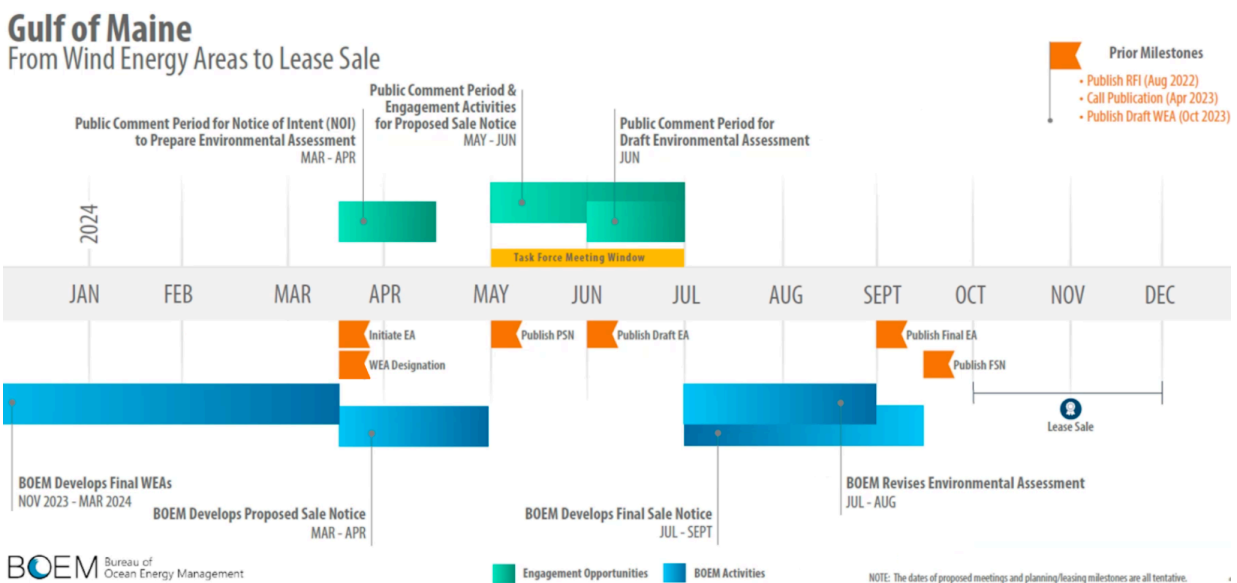
2,001,902 acres

From the Draft WEA to the Final WEA...

BOEM worked with NCCOS to run another suitability model. They used the Draft WEA as the new spatial boundary and reduced the number of datalayers to simplify the model. This added the most weight to the areas stakeholders were most concerned about: key areas for fishing and the North Atlantic Right Whale. The model still represented fisheries, wind, natural and cultural resources, and industry and operations submodels to inform the least conflicted area. Notably, the Final WEA excludes the area that represents the top 10% of groundfish landings from Vessel Trip Report (VTR) data and puts a 5-mile buffer around Cashes Ledge Groundfish Closure Area. Both of these excluded areas were from feedback from stakeholders and included as constraints (or areas not suitable for offshore wind) in the final decision.

Next Steps and Engagement Opportunities:

The Final WEA essentially sets the bounds for the initial [Environmental Assessment](#). BOEM still needs to identify proposed lease area(s) within this Final WEA through a Proposed Sale Notice, followed by a Final Sale Notice, and should BOEM proceed, an auction.



The PSN provides important details about the areas being considered, the way the leases will be designed, how the auction will be held, criteria for evaluating competing bids, and procedures for lease award, appeals, and lease execution. The PSN will break up the Final WEA into proposed lease areas. BOEM is considering phased leasing in the Gulf of Maine, therefore, the PSN will propose details about what that process may look like (i.e. what areas will be leased first, how much time between phases).

The publication of the PSN will initiate a 60-day public comment period where stakeholders can provide input to inform the Final Sale Notice (FSN). Topics where public comment is informative include - but

are not limited to - lease stipulations, terms and conditions and bidding credits. For more information and examples of PSNs from other regions please check out the [Proposed Sale Notice Guide](#).

Public Comment



March - April: Public Comment Period for Notice of Intent to [Prepare Environmental Assessment \(EA\)](#)

- On March 18, 2024, BOEM published in the Federal Register a Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Assessment of potential impacts from offshore wind activities authorized by potential lease issuance (i.e., site assessment and characterization activities) in the WEA. The Notice initiates a 30-day public comment period. Another public comment period would occur if BOEM decides to move forward with a lease sale in the WEA.

[Submitting Comments on the Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Assessment in the following ways:](#)

- In [written form by mail](#), enclosed in an envelope to:
Brandi Sangunett
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
Office of Renewable Energy Programs
45600 Woodland Road
Mailstop: VAM-OREP
Sterling, Virginia 20166
- Go to [Regulations.gov](#) and search for docket number "[BOEM-2024-0020](#)." Click the "Comment" button to the right of the document link. Enter your information and comment, then click "Submit."

May - June: Public Comment Period and Engagement Activities for PSN

- Check back here for more detailed information about virtual and in-person meeting announcements and an explanation on how to submit comments.