

SouthCoast Wind Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA) Renewal Request

Submitted To:

**National Marine Fisheries Service
Office of Protected Resources
Silver Spring, MD**

Submitted By:

SouthCoast Wind Energy LLC



SOUTHCOAST WIND

June 2024

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued an Incidental Harassment Authorization to SouthCoast Wind to cover marine site characterization surveys in coastal waters off Massachusetts effective May 12, 2023, through May 11, 2024 (hereafter referred to as the 2023–2024 IHA). As discussed with NMFS at the June 10, 2024 meeting, and per Section 8 of the 2023–2024 IHA, SouthCoast Wind is requesting a Renewal of the IHA under the condition that SouthCoast Wind did not complete the survey scope of work authorized by the 2023–2024 IHA prior to the end of the effective period (May 11, 2024) and is planning to complete a subset of the activities covered by the initial IHA in 2024–2025.

SouthCoast Wind plans to conduct HRG surveys between September 1, 2024 – May 11, 2025, using the same survey equipment, methods and types of vessels as those authorized in the 2023–2024 IHA. The 2024–2025 surveys will also be within the same survey area described in the 2022 and 2023 IHA Applications (Figure 1). The planned survey trackline, active sound source days, and vessel days will be reduced in 2024–2025 compared to those authorized in the 2023–2024 IHA (Table 1). A total of up to 700 km of trackline (500 km in the Lease Area [Inter-Array Cable (IAC) surveys] and 200 km in the Export Cable Corridors (ECC) [potential HDD surveys]) will be surveyed (Table 1). On average, approximately 50 km will be surveyed per day within the Lease Area and 15 km within the ECC resulting in 10 active sound source days in the Lease Area and ~14 in the ECC. The previous IHA application described up to 4 vessels being utilized to conduct the surveys. The 2024–2025 surveys may use up to 4 vessels as well, but it is likely that fewer will be required. SouthCoast Wind survey contractors and PSO contractors will conduct all surveys in accordance with the requirements stipulated in the 2023–2024 IHA.

The reduced level of survey activity was used to update the take calculations for the 2024–2025 surveys (Table 3). Density-based take estimates were calculated using the same methods as described in the 2022 and 2023 IHA Applications. However, since it is possible that all of the survey activity within each region could occur within a single month (10 days of survey activity in the Lease Area and 14 days in the ECC), the take estimates were calculated by multiplying the highest monthly density for each species (from the months of September through May) within each region (Lease Area and ECC) by the area of water likely to be ensonified by geophysical survey equipment in each region. The results of the take calculations in each region (see the “Density-based Take by Survey Region” columns in Table 3) were then summed to arrive at the total estimated take (Table 3). The density-based take estimates were compared to the PSO data take estimates and the mean group size for each species and the largest value was selected as the requested take (Table 3).

SouthCoast Wind submitted a final Protected Species Observer (PSO) report for the survey activity completed under the 2023–2024 IHA to NMFS on September 23, 2023. This report demonstrates that the monitoring results do not indicate impacts of a scale or nature not previously analyzed or authorized. A summary of the findings within this report are shown below in Table 2.

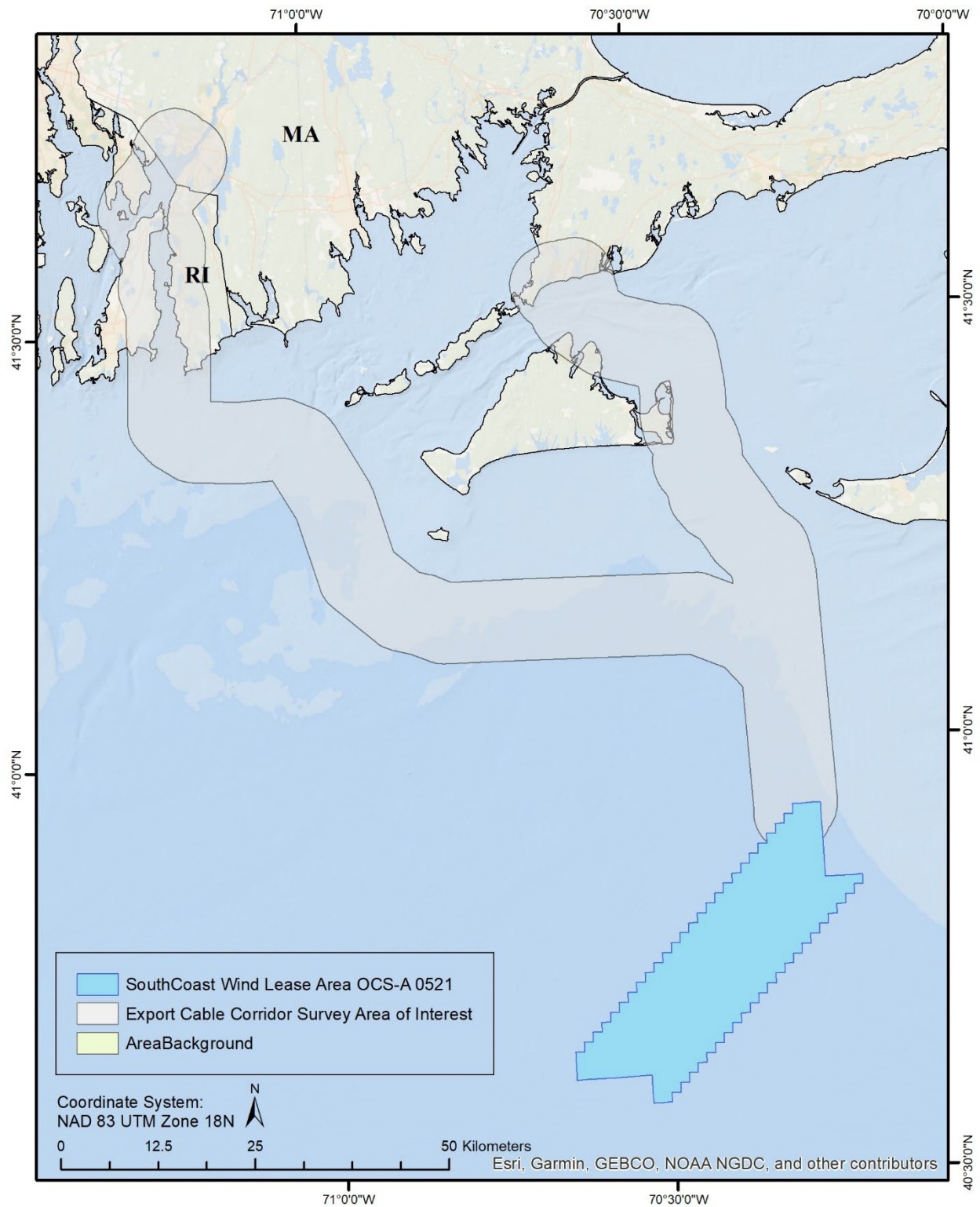


Figure 1. Map of SouthCoast Wind Lease Area OCS-A 0521 within the Massachusetts Wind Energy Area and the proposed Export Cable Corridors to Falmouth, MA and to Brayton Point, Somerset, MA.

Table 1. Geophysical Surveys Completed in 2023 – 2024 and Lines Remaining

Location	IHA Survey Trackline Authorized in 2023 – 2024	Total Survey Trackline Completed 2023 – 2024	Approximate Survey Trackline Remaining (km)	Planned Survey Trackline for 2024 – 2025 Surveys
ECC – Potential HDD	750	0	750	200
Lease Area – Inter-array Cable (IAC)	1,950	718	1,232	500

Table 2. Number of Incidental Take of Marine Mammals Authorized by the 2023 – 2024 IHA issued by NMFS May 12, 2023

Common Name	Genus / Species	Marine Mammal Category as it Applies to Mitigation Requirements in the IHA	Authorized Takes by Level B Harassment	Number of Animals Observed inside the IHA-defined Level B Harassment Zone	Number of Takes Remaining
North Atlantic right whale	<i>Eubalaena glacialis</i>	North Atlantic right whale	6	0	6
Fin whale	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>	Large whale	7	3	4
Sei whale	<i>Balaenoptera borealis</i>	Large whale	2	0	2
Minke whale	<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>	Large whale	13	1	12
Humpback whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	Large whale	55	1	54
Sperm whale	<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>	Large whale	2	0	2
Atlantic white-sided dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus acutus</i>	Small odontocete	28	0	28
Atlantic spotted dolphin	<i>Stenella frontalis</i>	Small odontocete	29	0	29
Common bottlenose dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>	Small odontocete	152	42	110
Long-finned Pilot whale	<i>Globicephala melas</i>	Large odontocete	8	0	8
Risso's dolphin	<i>Grampus griseus</i>	Small odontocete	7	0	7
Common dolphin	<i>Delphinus delphis</i>	Small odontocete	2,094	40	2,054
Harbor porpoise	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>	Small odontocete	83	0	83
Gray seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>	Seal	167	0	167
Harbor seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	Seal	74	1	73

Table 3. Number of Level B takes requested and percentages of each stock abundance for 2024 – 2025 surveys.

Species	Density-based Take by Survey Region		Total Density-based Calculated Takes	Rounded Calculated Take	PSO Data Take Estimate	Mean Group Size	Requested Take	Abundance NMFS ^a	Percent of NMFS ^a Stock Abundance
	Lease Area	Export Cable Corridors							
Mysticetes									
Blue Whale*	0.0	0.0	0.0	1	-	1	3	402	0.7
Fin Whale*	0.4	0.1	0.5	1	1.3	1.8	6	6,802	0.1
Humpback Whale	0.4	0.1	0.5	1	11.3	2.0	12	1,396	0.9
Minke Whale	2.1	0.6	2.7	3	2.5	1.2	4	21,968	0.0
North Atlantic Right Whale*	0.9	0.3	1.2	2	0.0	2.4	8	340	2.4
Sei Whale*	0.3	0.0	0.3	1	0.2	1.6	5	6,292	0.1
Odontocetes									
Atlantic Spotted Dolphin	1.0	0.0	1.0	1	-	29	87	31,506	0.3
Atlantic White-Sided Dolphin	5.2	0.6	5.8	6	-	27.9	84	93,233	0.1
Common Bottlenose Dolphin	2.8	0.2	3.0	4	31.1	7.8	32	64,587	0.0
Common Dolphin	47.2	2.1	49.3	50	428.5	34.9	429	93,100	0.5
Harbor Porpoise	16.1	2.9	19.0	19	0.0	2.7	19	85,765	0.0
Pilot Whales	0.4	0.0	0.4	1	0.9	8.4	26	57,941	0.0
Risso's Dolphin	0.5	0.0	0.5	1	-	5.4	17	44,067	0.0
Sperm Whale*	0.1	0.0	0.1	1	0.1	1.5	5	5,895	0.1
Pinnipeds									
Harbor Seal	8.4	6.0	14.4	15	0.5	1.4	15	61,366	0.0
Gray Seal	18.9	13.5	32.4	33	7.9	1.4	33	27,911	0.1

* Denotes species listed under the Endangered Species Act

^a NMFS 2023 Stock Assessment Report and 2024 Draft Stock Assessment Report (Hayes et al. 2023; NMFS 2024).

Literature Cited

- Hayes, S.A., E. Josephson, K. Maze-Foley, P.E. Rosel, J. McCordic, and J. Wallace, editors. 2023. US Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico marine mammal stock assessments 2022. U.S. Dep. Commer., Woods Hole, MA. NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-NE-245. 257 p.
- [NMFS] National Marine Fisheries Service. 2024. Draft U.S. Atlantic Marine Mammal Stock Assessments: 2023. 99 p. Available online at <http://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/s3/2024-01/Draft-2023-MMSARs-Public-Comment>. Accessed 2024 March 26.