



June 12, 2023

The Honorable Elizabeth Klein
Director
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Klein,

We write regarding the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM) recent publication of its Gulf of Maine Call for Information and Nominations (the "Call"), which invites public comment on potential commercial wind energy development in the Gulf of Maine. We appreciate that BOEM has solicited feedback from a variety of stakeholders across Maine; however, we are concerned that critical fishing grounds and areas that are closed to fishing continue to be considered for offshore wind development in the Gulf of Maine.

Fishing is a vital part of Maine's economy and heritage, and countless numbers of Maine communities rely on this income to sustain their communities. Ninety-four percent of the lobster in the United States comes from the Gulf of Maine. While lobster is Maine's most profitable landing, Maine is also home to a variety of species including halibut, tuna, flounder, redfish, black sea bass, monkfish, mackerel, rock and sand crab, mussels, hardshell and softshell clams, oysters, scallops, conchs, and squid, just to list a few.

Fishermen and women across the country and in Maine have expressed several concerns regarding offshore wind development. Maine's fishermen have worked for decades with state and federal regulators on numerous rules and regulations to preserve the fisheries and the varied species that inhabit those waters. The Call identifies 9.8 million acres to site potential commercial offshore wind projects in the Gulf of Maine. This includes Lobster Management Area (LMA) 1 and three areas that are closed to fishing either permanently or seasonally. Although BOEM reduced the acreage initially proposed by 29 percent, it failed to remove these key areas, and instead specifically requested additional comments on these areas.

LMA 1 is critical fishing ground to Maine's lobster fleet and an integral area to Maine's fishing heritage. Our fishing industry has stated that siting wind energy projects in LMA 1 would be devastating. Both the Maine Lobstermen's Association and the Maine Lobstering Union have submitted comments to BOEM asking that LMA 1 be removed from consideration. The Fisheries Working Group, which was a part of the Maine Offshore Wind Roadmap Advisory Committee, recommended excluding LMA 1 in July 2022. Siting offshore wind development outside of

LMA 1 would avoid conflict not only with the majority of Maine's commercial fishing industry, but also with recreational fishermen and other commercial and recreational marine users. Our fishing community feels that their voices are not being heard. A straightforward way for BOEM to show it is committed to minimizing impact to fisheries would be to adopt the fishing community's primary request: remove LMA 1 from consideration.

In addition, parts of the Massachusetts Restricted Area, the Great South Channel Restricted Area, and most of the LMA 1 restricted area remain on the table for offshore wind development. All of these areas are closed to fishing either permanently or seasonally due to the potential presence of a North Atlantic Right Whale. If an area is closed to fishing, how could this area still be considered for offshore wind development? This is inconsistent with the fact that our fishermen are required to comply with closures in these areas.

The University of Maine and its partners across the State have been at the forefront of deepwater floating turbine technology, and offshore wind has the potential to create good paying jobs in our State; however, we must minimize conflict with our fishing industry and preserve our current thriving marine economy. As BOEM's development of Wind Energy Areas moves forward it should take swift action to remove LMA 1 and areas closed to fishing from consideration to show fishermen and other ocean users that their concerns are being heard by your agency. We also ask BOEM to continue meaningful engagement with fishermen and ocean users across Maine to minimize all potential conflicts, beyond those areas discussed in this letter.

We appreciate your consideration of our comments. Our staff, as well as fishing industry representatives across Maine, are available to answer additional questions on this matter.

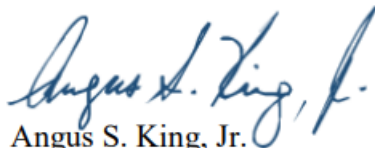
Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Jared Golden
Member of Congress



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Janet T. Mills
Governor of Maine

CC: Janet Coit, Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries