



WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

OFFSHORE ENERGY POLICY

As presented to the Council September 17, 2020

Purpose and Need

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (Council) recognizes the need for efficient renewable power generation sources for the Pacific Island region. Conventional hydrocarbon-based power generators are expensive to operate and maintain on remote island locations, fuel is expensive, and the generators create air emission and hazardous waste disposal problems.

The purpose of this Offshore Energy Policy is to inform potential energy developers and others with regulatory authority over these activities of the Council's interest in offshore energy development and to ensure early and full engagement in the review process. The Council's early involvement in the review process will provide ample time to fully assess any potential impacts on managed fisheries, marine ecosystems and the communities that rely upon those resources as authorized through the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. In developing the policy, the Council considered the Council's Guiding Principles, the National Standards of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Council's Policies on Marine Planning and Climate Change, Marine Protected Areas, Aquaculture, Essential Fish Habitat and Vessel Monitoring System.

Definitions

Offshore energy projects are defined as power generating devices located below the MHLW and can include wind, tidal, ocean wave/current, and other devices that generate electrical power. These types of facilities are typically large in size, anchored to the bottom substrate and have transmission cables connecting the power generation device to the end user on a near-by island.

Policy Statement

The Council's policy is to support offshore energy projects provided social and environmental impacts to fishery and marine resources are minimized or mitigated.

The Council is particularly interested in the potential benefits and impacts offshore energy facilities may have on those marine and human resources the Council is mandated to manage and conserve. These interests include, but are not limited to:

- Fishery resources managed by the Council under the auspices of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act;
- Island fishing communities and access to traditional fishery resources and fishing grounds;

- Pacific island fishing sectors;
- Product supply to local, national, and international seafood markets; and
- Impacts to marine ecosystems, protected species, habitat (EFH and HAPC) and water quality.

To address these concerns, offshore energy projects should, at a minimum:

1. Consider research and monitoring programs to analyze the effects of operations on migrations patterns of fish and other marine life, essential fish habitat, fishing activities, and the fishing community;
2. Coordinate with the appropriate agencies to ensure environmentally responsible siting and operations that minimizes disruption to the marine environment;
3. Develop best management practices that addresses, amongst other impacts, noise, access to resources, emergency events, and minimize conflicts with other ocean users; and
4. Consult with the community (including fishing and indigenous communities) throughout planning and operations.