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Beyond heat maps: understanding fisheries conflict and coexistence with offshore wind energy to advance a just energy transition

Abstract: Commercial fishers may be disproportionately impacted by offshore wind development compared with other ocean users due to possible conflicts with fishing gear in productive fishing grounds. Spatially explicit models can inform near-term siting of offshore wind power and facilitate collaboration between the commercial fishing and offshore wind industries in the United States. This presentation will review a model that was developed to examine conflict and compatibility of surfclam and scallop fisheries with offshore wind in the mid-Atlantic. Furthermore, interviews with fishers and other key stakeholders can help examine the issues among the industries in a more nuanced way. This presentation will also review results of recent interviews with fishers and key stakeholders, identifying what may lie ahead for future offshore wind developments, including floating wind in the Gulf of Maine.

Bio: Dr. Bates has 15 years of experience working on conservation planning, energy policy, and analyzing social acceptance of energy systems. She researches social and environmental considerations around marine energy systems, such as tidal energy and offshore wind energy. Her expertise is in developing statistically robust surveying of communities, stakeholder engagement processes, and spatial models to identify priority areas for energy siting. Her current work focuses on establishing a just energy transition, where communities with less political power are prioritized and incorporated into decision-making processes. Dr. Bates earned her Ph.D. in Marine Policy at the University of Delaware, with the Center for Carbon-free Power Integration, and previously worked at the University of Massachusetts Amherst with the Wind Energy Center and currently is on the steering committee of the UMass Energy Transition Initiative. She has worked on energy policy with U.S. Senator Coons to incentivize renewable energy infrastructure along the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf. Prior to her academic appointments, spent nearly a decade working in forest management, developing community conservation projects with the Southern California Mountains Foundation.