

WHO FISHES HERE?

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Federal statutes governing the leasing process for potential offshore wind energy development require that the impacts of development, including economic impacts to fisheries, be assessed by decision-makers. However, mapping efforts of prime fishing grounds have not been at a fine enough scale for ocean planning. To help fill a data gap, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) funded NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) to use an innovative method to spatially map fish harvest revenue. Using vessel trip reports, fisheries observer data, and seafood dealer reports, NEFSC created a revenue intensity map from Maine to North Carolina, which was overlaid with BOEM's proposed wind energy areas and outer continental shelf leases.

With the ability to break out the data by gear type, home port, and species, BOEM is using the results to tailor its outreach efforts to potentially affected stakeholders. Additionally, the revenue map provides a baseline for discussions with fishermen that are not required to submit vessel trip reports, but may fish the same or different areas. Through a cooperative agreement with the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program, BOEM and the Commonwealth are vetting the federal data with the local fishing communities and conducting additional mapping exercises to capture the locations of non-permitted species fishing (e.g., conch, menhaden). This combined approach will be valuable for understanding commercial fisheries as BOEM prepares to assess the potential impacts of commercial wind energy development offshore Virginia.