

Council

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Emerging Threats and Opportunities in the United States

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Near and Offshore Energy Development

In response to higher energy prices and demand for renewable energy sources, energy developers in the U.S. have taken the initiative to explore, expand and implement alternative energy projects that include tidal energy, wave energy, hydro-kinetic, and offshore wind projects. The U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has issued numerous preliminary permits within the range of the Gulf of Maine DPS, allowing energy producers to explore the feasibility of developing such projects. In 2010, the first pilot scale tidal energy project in Maine was deployed in Cobscook Bay in Eastern Maine, U.S.A.

Most of these emerging technologies are novel. As such, the effects of their operations are largely untested. Before any license is issued for the development of these projects, FERC must consult with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to help ensure that these projects employ measures that are protective of Atlantic salmon. NMFS uses the best available science in order to predict the effects that any project may have on Atlantic salmon and their habitat. At this time, however, there is very little science from within the U.S. to help inform these recommendations.

The U.S. would therefore benefit from any information from other countries that can be used to help the US make informed decisions with regard to offshore and nearshore energy development and associated electrical grid infrastructure. Specifically, we would welcome information on the different types of technologies and how they may directly or indirectly affect survival and behavior of Atlantic salmon. Information on best practices to help inform decisions on site selection and project design that can minimize adverse impacts to Atlantic salmon would also be helpful as well as information on methods and techniques to conduct pre and post monitoring of energy development projects.