



Advancing Environmentally Responsible Development of Offshore Wind Energy for
New York State:
Outreach & Communications Plan for the Environmental
Technical Working Group (E-TWG)

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Summary

New York has convened the Environmental Technical Working Group (E-TWG) to advise the State about the environmentally responsible development of offshore wind energy resources (NYSERDA 2018). The E-TWG brings together a wide range of stakeholders interested in offshore wind development activities in New York State and elsewhere along the Eastern Seaboard from Massachusetts to Virginia. The E-TWG works to directly produce products, such as letters, reports, and other documents; forms specialist committees (SCs) of experts in the field to produce products on particular topics; and facilitates stakeholder engagement through the State of the Science Workshops. These activities, among others, serve to support State efforts to advance the environmentally responsible development of offshore wind. Outreach to offshore wind energy and wildlife stakeholder communities, and the general public, has been identified by the E-TWG as a critical component of the group's activities.

The following document outlines an outreach and communications plan to support stakeholder engagement. The primary audience for topical communications is informed stakeholders in the offshore wind and wildlife field, including New York State (NYS) agencies, other states, federal agencies, developers, and environmental non-governmental organizations (eNGOs), among others. Other audiences include the general public and other NYS Technical Working Groups (TWGs). Communications are expected to focus on the State of the Science Workshops, as well as other E-TWG activities (including meetings, products produced by the E-TWG and SCs, and public comment opportunities). Avenues of communication will include, but are not limited to, the E-TWG website, an email list-serv, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) public webinars, and presentations at conferences and meetings.

Background

New York convened the E-TWG to advise the State about the environmentally responsible development of offshore wind energy resources (NYSERDA 2018). In addition to the E-TWG itself, which is made up of a diverse group of stakeholders, the State's proposed approach for stakeholder engagement on environmental issues also incorporates Specialist Committees (SCs), which bring together science-based subject matter experts under the direction of the E-TWG, and public "State of the Science" workshops (Figure 1). Input from a wide range of knowledgeable stakeholders will help inform the State's efforts to advance offshore wind in environmentally responsible ways. Facilitating outreach to the stakeholder community and general public will also serve to inform these groups about State efforts, and has been identified by the E-TWG as a critical component of group activities.

Objectives

Communications between active participants in the E-TWG process (e.g., NYSEERDA, E-TWG member organizations, SC member organizations) and the broader stakeholder community are intended to 1) inform stakeholders and the public about the work that is being done by the E-TWG and the State of New York in regards to developing offshore wind in an environmentally responsible way, 2) inform the stakeholder community about the state of knowledge on offshore wind and wildlife science more generally, and 3) facilitate regional coordination among entities working in this field.

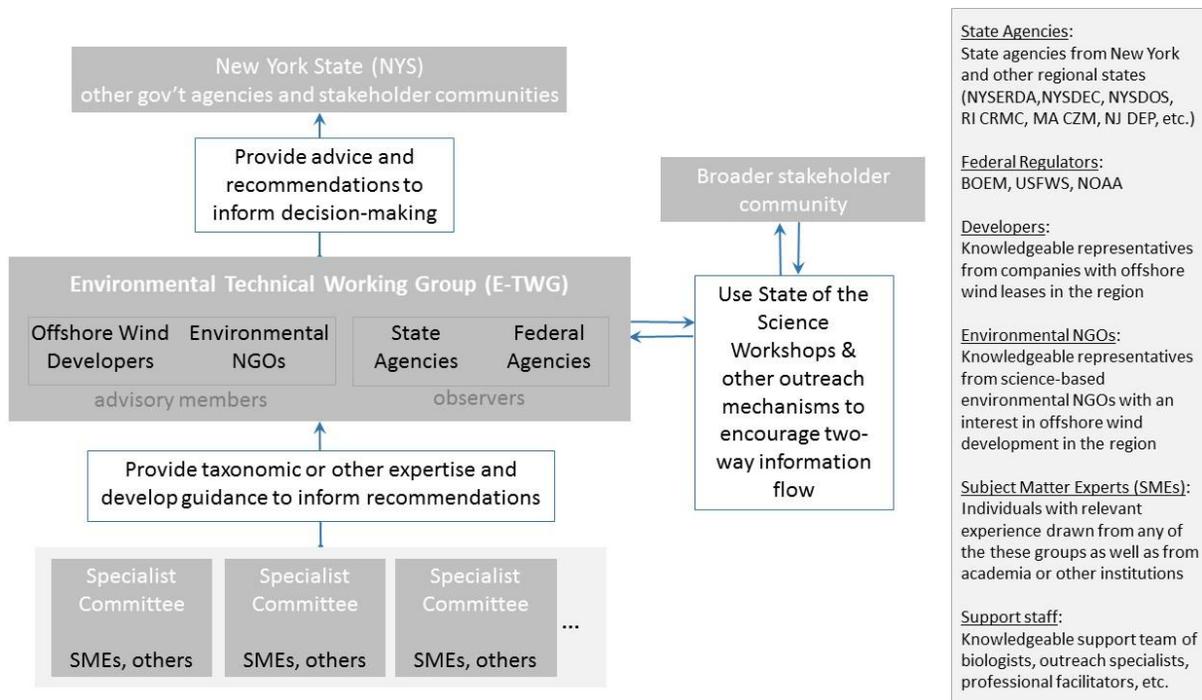


Figure 1. Stakeholder groups involved with the E-TWG effort. Specialist committees, made up of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and others, develop guidance documents or other products that are submitted to the E-TWG. The E-TWG, with equal representation from developers and eNGOs, provides recommendations to the State of New York. Specialist committee products, along with E-TWG input on those products, inform collective decision making by the State. State of the Science Workshops communicate E-TWG and committee efforts to the broader stakeholder community, and allow stakeholders an opportunity to provide input on these processes and products.

Audiences

We recognize three sets of stakeholders that are important to communicate with as this effort continues, with different communications and outreach goals and strategies required for each group:

- Informed stakeholders.** Offshore wind energy developers, eNGOs, environmental consulting firms, state and federal agencies, academics, and other subject matter experts should, as much as possible, be incorporated into the E-TWG and SC process and have opportunities to make their voices heard and to engage through State of the Science Workshops. Emerging regional science funding bodies, such as the Responsible Offshore Science Alliance (ROSA), also fall into this category of informed stakeholders. There is a need for reciprocal communications with this group, to inform them of ongoing activities and also to solicit their input to inform strategic priorities and develop end products. Such two-way communications will also ensure that E-TWG efforts do not duplicate ongoing efforts by other states, federal agencies, regional funding bodies, or other actors in this field to address offshore wind and wildlife issues. **Informed stakeholders, including New York State agencies, agency staff from other regional states, staff from BOEM and other federal agencies, offshore wind energy developers, eNGOs, ROSA and other emerging regional science bodies, and others, are the primary audience for E-TWG communications and outreach activities.**

- The general public. Interested parties who do not have technical expertise, including coastal communities that may be interested in or impacted by offshore wind energy development, should also be kept informed of ongoing activities and results. Informing the public of the E-TWG's efforts, as well as other ongoing science in the field, will demonstrate the State's commitment to environmental responsibility and engender support for offshore wind energy development by the State.
- Other Technical Working Groups. The New York Offshore Wind Master Plan (NYSERDA 2018) identifies four Technical Working Groups, of which the E-TWG is one; the others are focused on (1) jobs and supply chains, (2) maritime issues, and (3) recreational and commercial fishing. The E-TWG should maintain communications with these other Working Groups and associated personnel to ensure that areas of topical overlap (such as fish habitat, which is of interest to both the environmental and fisheries groups) are addressed appropriately and without duplication of effort. There may also be efficiencies in sharing process information between groups. If suggested by the respective TWGs, meetings could also be coordinated to facilitate travel and cross-meeting attendance for stakeholders participating in more than one group.

Communication Topics

The outreach and communications strategy for the E-TWG will be focused on three major topic areas: E-TWG activities, meeting summaries, and other products; SC reports and guidance documents; and State of the Science Workshops. The methods of communication for each of these topics are discussed in the "Channels of Communication" section, below.

E-TWG activities, meeting summaries, and other products

Transparency in E-TWG processes allows audiences to understand and remain informed about the activities of the E-TWG, build trust in the process, and avoid duplication of efforts between the E-TWG and other groups operating on offshore wind and wildlife issues. Public summaries of meeting discussions are a main avenue for communication of E-TWG activities. Additional products may also be produced by the E-TWG, including letters, editorials, and reports.

Communication Opportunities/Needs

1. Following each meeting, agendas, summaries, and presentations provide an avenue to ensure audiences are aware of meeting substance. Other E-TWG products provide additional information on activities and focus of the group.
2. For activities that may require a long process, it may be important to provide updates prior to the creation of a product. This type of communication could serve multiple purposes, including ensuring that other stakeholders are aware of the activities in order to identify opportunities for collaboration or to ensure that efforts are not being duplicated elsewhere.
3. The E-TWG or NYSERDA may choose at certain junctures to request stakeholder input on a particular decision or product.

SC reports and guidance documents

Topically-focused SCs bring together science-based subject matter experts to develop products and recommendations that inform or advance the environmentally responsible development of offshore wind. SCs may include non-E-TWG members as well as Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from a range of

backgrounds, as appropriate for each committee's charge. Products developed by the SCs could include final reports, guidelines, or other technical products, depending upon the charge of each SC.

Communication Opportunities/Needs

1. During SC processes, topics of SC efforts should be communicated to the broader stakeholder community, to identify interested stakeholders with relevant expertise to serve on the committee and help identify related efforts with which each SC should coordinate.
2. Public dissemination of final products provides a means to make stakeholders aware of the work that is being done by experts in the field in relation to wildlife and offshore wind energy development. SC products may be technical, so there may also be opportunities for the development of public outreach documents such as handouts to summarize the work of the specialist committee and make it more accessible to a larger audience.
3. The E-TWG or NYSERDA may choose at certain junctures to request stakeholder input on a particular decision or product.
4. Each SC, depending on its charge, may identify additional opportunities and needs for communication with particular audiences.

State of the Science Workshops

The main goals of the State of the Science Workshops are to promote *regional coordination* of research studies, guidelines development, and other efforts along the eastern seaboard (Massachusetts to North Carolina); provide a forum for *expert information exchange and discussion*, to promote collaboration and inform E-TWG and Specialist Committee activities; and to contribute to *public engagement and education* about ongoing efforts to understand, minimize, and mitigate environmental impacts from offshore wind energy development.

Addressing these goals through a conference or workshop was identified as a key initial step during stakeholder scoping interviews in 2017-2018, which were conducted to inform the structure and function of the E-TWG (Williams et al. 2018). The first State of the Science workshop was held in November 2018, and brought together a diversity of stakeholders for presentations and discussions around habitat and wildlife interactions with offshore wind. The first workshop set the baseline for future discussions by familiarizing attendees with wildlife-related work that has already been done (in New York or elsewhere). The workshop was open to the public with prior registration, but the primary focus was on technical discussions during most of the meeting. A public open house and poster session during the evening included more general discussion and opportunities for informal public engagement.

Following the workshop, participants and E-TWG members indicated that there could be utility in repeating such a meeting at regular intervals. A similar workshop held every year or every several years would help maintain cohesion within the stakeholder community, keep stakeholders abreast of the current science, facilitate coordination, and communicate E-TWG and SC results and ongoing efforts. Future meetings may follow a similar format to the first workshop, or may be structured differently to facilitate achieving the primary objectives identified for each meeting.

Communication Opportunities/Needs

1. Pre-workshop advertising and dissemination of information. Leading up to the workshop, workshop promotion is key to ensuring substantial stakeholder participation in scientific sessions and public participation opportunities such as poster sessions.

2. Workshop sessions and discussions. The workshop provides a venue to share information about E-TWG and SC activities.
3. Post-workshop reporting. A workshop report or proceedings that summarize presentations and discussions is publicly disseminated following the workshop.

Other related efforts

There are additional NYSERDA efforts that are related to the E-TWG, but that do not fall within the categories listed above, for which the E-TWG may act in an advisory role. This could include additional workshops, stakeholder engagement efforts, research projects, or other activities.

Communication Opportunities/Needs

1. Outreach to stakeholders for participation where relevant
2. Public dissemination of final products, as a means to make stakeholders aware of the work that is being done by experts in the field in relation to wildlife and offshore wind energy development. Products may be technical, so there may also be opportunities for the development of public outreach documents such as handouts to summarize the work of these efforts and make outputs more accessible to a larger audience.
3. Other (those involved with these efforts may identify additional opportunities and needs for communication with particular audiences).

Channels of Communication

There are multiple channels of communication that provide opportunities to share information on the above topics with different audiences. These include an email list serv, project webpage, and NYSERDA quarterly webinars, among others (below). Additionally, E-TWG and SC activities and final products will be featured as part of the NYSERDA Communications Department's ongoing community outreach and media efforts (e.g., press releases, email blasts, website updates, social media posts, public meetings, etc.).

Public events

NYSERDA conducts offshore wind stakeholder outreach to local communities and political representatives that are interested in and/or may be impacted by offshore wind energy development. These public meetings include discussion of the TWGs and E-TWG activities. The State of the Science Workshops, and other public events as appropriate, also provide opportunities for direct engagement with stakeholders and the general public to share information about E-TWG activities and other important topics.

Invitation-only meetings

In addition to events that are open to the public, the E-TWG and NYSERDA may host invite-only technical workshops and meetings focused on specific topics, such as the 2019 and 2020 workshops focused on developing a framework for a regional science entity. These meetings could be held as part of, or in conjunction with, State of the Science Workshops, or they could be held independently. These meetings focus on communication specifically with informed stakeholders, potentially including members of other TWGs. New York States will work with E-TWG and SC members and other stakeholders to identify and recruit potential attendees.

Reports and proceedings

The E-TWG and SCs will develop reports and other products, which will be made publicly available on the E-TWG website and shared via email list serves (below). Support staff will also develop summaries from E-TWG meetings and workshop reports or proceedings, which likewise will be shared publicly.

Email list serves

We will develop two email lists for interested parties: one specifically for State of the Science Workshops, and one for other E-TWG and SC activities. The target audiences will include E-TWG and SC members, other informed stakeholders and stakeholders from other TWGs, and members of the general public. List serv updates will be a convenient way for E-TWG and SC members to keep their organizations, as well as other stakeholders, up to date on their activities. By sharing meeting summaries and other updates, E-TWG members and interested parties can further disseminate products within and outside their respective organizations.

Lists will initially be populated by NYSERDA staff, support staff, and E-TWG members with contacts that we believe will be interested in this project, including identified stakeholders on environmental issues and key personnel from other TWGs. Additional names will be added via a sign-up form on the project website and attendance at State of the Science Workshops and other meetings. We will also maintain a list of relevant newsletters and websites, such as the Tethys Blast, National Wind Coordinating Collaborative, NYSERDA offshore wind email list, regional planning body list serves, and the Atlantic Marine Bird Cooperative, to reach out to in order to extend the reach of these email updates beyond our own contacts.

Using Salesforce and/or contacts management capabilities through the website (Wix), we will send periodic email updates (minimum of six per year) about recent and upcoming meetings, draft and final products, and other opportunities to get involved in offshore wind and wildlife issues. All emails will include a link for readers to unsubscribe from future emails if desired. Emails will go out to the State of the Science Workshop list serv as needed to advertise upcoming meetings and disseminate resulting workshop reports. The more general list serv will briefly mention Workshop activities, but will also be used to:

- Disseminate E-TWG meeting summaries
- Disseminate E-TWG and SC reports and other products
- Announce requests for public input on E-TWG-related efforts, as relevant
- Announce other project activities, as needed (for example, conference presentations focused on E-TWG activities, website updates, etc.)
- Provide an annual update on E-TWG, SC, and workshop activities, as well as on the offshore wind industry more generally (within the target geographic area of MA to NC)

Project webpage

The newly redesigned project webpage (www.nyetwg.com) serves as a forum for transmission of information about the E-TWG, SCs, and State of the Science meeting to both E-TWG and SC participants, as well as members of the public. It is regularly updated by support staff to provide up-to-date information on project activities. The website currently includes the following:

- A main landing page that briefly describes NYSERDA’s goals and planned approach for this effort and includes news and project updates (including information about upcoming meetings).
- An "About Us" section that includes both a “Who we are” page and an “About this Effort” page that provides background information on the Offshore Wind Master Plan and the framework for E-TWG and SC operations, and lists people and organizations involved with this effort and their respective roles.
- An “E-TWG Activities” section that includes a main landing page with a regularly updated timeline for E-TWG activities, and pages including an “E-TWG Meeting Archive” (agenda, meeting minutes, and presentations), an “E-TWG Products” page for other group products, an “Environmental Mitigation Plans” page that provides information and documents relating to the environmental mitigation plan process for projects selected under New York procurements, and a “Bird & Bat Research Framework” page detailing the effort by NYSERDA to develop a scientific framework to guide long-term study of potential impacts to birds and bats from offshore wind energy development. Additional pages can be added under the “E-TWG Activities” section as needed.
- A “Resources” section that includes information on the MMP Tool, a lease information map, NYSERDA resources such as the Offshore Wind Master Plan, as well as a page for other related resources.
- A “State of the Science Workshop” section with two main pages: a “Past Workshops” page that acts as an archive for information on previous workshops, and a current workshop page that can be updated to provide information on the next upcoming workshop, with links to additional pages for content on workshop logistics, scientific program, travel and accommodations, registration, and abstract submission.
- Sign-up forms for the email list servs. Current list serv management is through the website (Wix), but will be integrated with NYSERDA’s Salesforce contact management program as needed.
- Information on other public events or meetings related to the E-TWG, as appropriate.

NYSERDA webinars

Following release of the Offshore Wind Master Plan (NYSERDA 2018), NYSERDA hosts quarterly public webinars about the status of Master Plan efforts and offshore wind energy development. The activities of the E-TWG and SCs, as well as other Technical Working Groups, are summarized during these webinars. Presentations include details about how to obtain additional information.

Based on input from the E-TWG, NYSERDA may also choose to hold webinars on more technical offshore wind-related topics on a more frequent basis.

Communications documents

Some final products from the E-TWG or SCs may be long and technical, making them less accessible to members of the general public and specialists from other TWGs. Other priority topics may be best addressed directly to the general public. As directed by the E-TWG and/or NYSERDA, support staff and/or the NYSERDA Communications team may develop communications summary documents (for example, fact sheets, color reports, or brochures) aimed at a general audience, which provide useful context for non-experts. These communications documents will be shared on the project website and

via emails to the list serv. They may also be used in other NYSERDA Communications efforts via in-person meetings, social media posts, or earned media coverage of State and E-TWG activities.

Presentations at relevant meetings and conferences

NYSERDA personnel and E-TWG support staff will represent the E-TWG at meetings and conferences to share information about E-TWG and New York State activities, coordinate with and keep abreast of related efforts, and identify possible collaborations. This will include presentations at relevant wind-related conferences as well as taxon-specific meetings and conferences as designated by NYSERDA. With prior coordination with NYSERDA, E-TWG members may also represent the group at meetings.

Coordination of TWGs and other regional meetings and activities

NYSERDA has identified a staff person to serve a coordination role between the four Technical Working Groups, and bi-weekly calls are held between the TWG leads to provide updates. Additional coordination could include liaising between the support staff for different TWGs to communicate process decisions and goals. This coordination will be a particular focus for the E-TWG and the commercial fishing TWG. This communication will help avoid duplication of effort for areas of topical overlap between groups, and will encourage efficiency by sharing information about effective governance processes for the TWGs. If email updates and other above sources of information sharing are not felt to be sufficient, updates about the activities of other TWGs could also be included in E-TWG meeting agendas.

In addition to coordinating with other TWGs, there may be opportunities identified to coordinate with other regional research bodies, such as ROSA, that may be focused on similar issues. If such regional entities are identified as important for coordination with the E-TWG, regular coordination calls can be set up with representatives of these entities and E-TWG lead/support staff.

In addition to these efforts, overlap in membership between the fisheries and environmental TWGs and other regional efforts will informally facilitate coordination and collaboration.

Calls for input

There are potential opportunities to request stakeholder input on draft products and other E-TWG and SC efforts. The State of the Science Workshop itself provides an opportunity for informal public comment, due to the public's participation in the event. The E-TWG or NYSERDA may also choose at certain junctures to request stakeholder input on a particular decision or product. This could be achieved via an online form, email comment, or online survey. Allowing for input from a broader stakeholder community allows for greater buy-in and can improve the quality of end products or other outcomes.

Communication Strategy Summary

Overall, these different strategies are combined for the three main groups of interest and three main communications topics into an overall communications strategy (Table 1).

Table 1. External communication channels to be used to reach the three main groups of interest for the main topics of interest.

Communications Strategy			
Topic	Informed Stakeholders	General Public	Other TWGs
<i>E-TWG Activities</i>			
Documents including agendas, meeting summaries, products	Website, email list serv, presentations at meetings/conferences, coordination with regional funding bodies or other relevant entities	Communications documents, website, email list serv	Website, email list serv, TWG liaison
Updates on activities	Email list serv, presented at conference/meeting presentations, NYSERDA webinars, presentations at meetings/conferences, communicated via stakeholder representatives	Email list serv, public events, NYSERDA webinars	Email list serv, communicated via TWG liaison
Stakeholder input	Calls for input, invite-only meetings, email list serv		
<i>Specialist Committee Activities</i>			
SC Topic Updates	Email list serv, presentations at meetings/conferences, communicated via stakeholder representatives		Email list serv, TWG liaison
Technical Outputs/Final products	Reports, website, email list serv, presentations at meetings/conferences	Communications documents, email list serv, website, public events, NYSERDA webinars	Communications documents, email list serv, website
Stakeholder input	Calls for input, invite-only meetings, email list serv		
<i>State of the Science Workshops</i>			
Event Promotion	Website, email list-serv, presentations at meetings/conferences	Website, email list-serv, NYSERDA webinars	Website, email list-serv
Workshop sessions	Public event	Public event	Public event
Post-workshop reporting	Reports posted on website, email list serv	Reports posted on website, email list serv	Reports posted on website, email list serv
<i>Other Related Efforts</i>			
Topic updates	Email list serv, presentations at meetings/conferences, communicated via stakeholder representatives		Email list serv, TWG liaison
Technical Outputs/Final products	Reports, website, email list serv, presentations at meetings/conferences	Communications documents, email list serv, website, public events, NYSERDA webinars	Communications documents, email list serv, website

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