

# Developing communications materials about offshore wind energy activities and potential effects to birds

A new committee of the Environmental Technical Working Group

October 2024

## Background

The Environmental Technical Working Group (E-TWG) is an independent advisory body to the State of New York, formed in 2017, with a regional focus on offshore wind and wildlife issues from Maine to North Carolina. It is comprised of offshore wind developers, science-based environmental non-government organizations, and state and federal wildlife agencies. The E-TWG undertakes activities such as the development of wildlife best management practices and identification of research needs. With direction from the E-TWG and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), topically focused Specialist Committees (SCs) bring together science-based subject matter expertise to develop specific products and recommendations that inform or advance the environmentally responsible development of offshore wind. Specialist Committees include both E-TWG and non-E-TWG members from a range of backgrounds, as appropriate for each committee's charge.

## Goals

The goal of this committee is to develop communications materials to aid in the dissemination of current, accurate, and readily understandable science-based information around the potential impacts to birds from offshore wind energy development activities, in the form of an FAQ document. This is intended to be used as a resource for stakeholders interacting with the general public (e.g., during public meetings, for in the development of public-facing communications materials) but not for a general public audience.

## End Products

The committee will develop communication materials that can be used by a range of stakeholders to provide information to other stakeholders and the general public about offshore wind energy and birds. The initial end product is a working FAQ document (following a similar format to the existing [Whale communications FAQ document](#)) that can be used by various groups in their own communications around the topics of interest. A press packet with key talking points will be produced to accompany the FAQ. These materials will include original graphics as deemed necessary by the committee.

If deemed important by the committee, other communications materials (e.g., fact sheets, pamphlets, PowerPoint slides, infographics, animations) may be developed as secondary products.

## Process and Timeline

A SC will be formed under the auspices of the E-TWG. The process and end products for this committee are based on similar efforts by the [Whale Communications Committee](#).

*E-TWG support staff, with guidance from the SC, will conduct research and develop draft questions and answers for the SC to review. The committee will meet every 6 weeks to provide input on committee process and goals and discuss draft materials.* The SC will work with E-TWG support staff to:

- Collate and review existing materials on relevant topics;
- Identify key experts to inform product development, as well as key organizations and audiences to which results should be disseminated; and
- Develop a working FAQ document that covers topics identified by the committee, the E-TWG, and other stakeholders.
- Develop two-tiered answers to each FAQ, with a high-level bulleted response (e.g., key talking points) as well as a more technical summary with full scientific citations. Both versions will be aimed at stakeholders that are interacting with the general public;
- Develop a press packet based on the working FAQ document for E-TWG members, committee members, and others to disseminate the product on social media and other fora;
- Define other secondary communications products to be developed from the working FAQ document for target topics and audiences, as deemed valuable by the committee;
- Review draft and final versions of materials; and
- Disseminate final products for use by a range of stakeholders.

Committee members and E-TWG support staff will identify a group of external experts to provide written input on draft FAQ responses. The intended process of drafting and review (Figure 1) may be modified based on feedback from the SC, but in general is expected to include 1) identification of FAQ topics based on committee input and possible online survey, 2) support staff draft FAQ responses for review by the committee, 3) following committee review, topics are sent out for external expert review, 4) the committee then reviews revisions based on expert feedback, 5) draft responses go out to the E-TWG for review, 6) the committee reviews the final revisions, and 7) FAQ responses are published. We anticipate that the FAQ document will be a living document that is periodically updated as new FAQ responses are completed.

We anticipate that this effort will begin in late 2024. The committee's efforts are expected to be at least 6 months in duration; the end date will depend on the number of topics that the committee chooses to address in the FAQ document, as well as whether the committee decides to pursue development of additional products besides the FAQ and press packet.



Figure 1. General committee process.

## Time Commitment for SC Members

We anticipate the committee will meet every 6 weeks over at least a 6-month period. SC members will be expected to 1) provide input on SC activities, goals, and strategies, and 2) provide input on draft and final products. This will include attendance at virtual committee meetings and/or review of draft products outside of meetings.

## Support

Funding and support for this committee are provided by NYSERDA under the umbrella of the E-TWG. Kate McClellan Press (E-TWG Chair) will oversee the effort, while E-TWG support staff from the Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI) and Consensus Building Institute (CBI) will organize Specialist Committee efforts and lead the development of products. BRI and CBI staff have significant topical expertise on birds and offshore wind development as well as the development of communications materials and graphic design.