



New England Fishery Management Council

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John Pappalardo, *Chairman* | Paul J. Howard, *Executive Director*

March 28, 2011

Ms. Jessica Bradley  
Renewable Energy Program Specialist  
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management Regulation and Enforcement  
Office of Offshore Alternative Energy Programs  
381 Elden Street, Mail Stop 4090  
Herndon, VA 20170

**RE: Commercial Leasing for Wind Power on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Offshore Massachusetts – Request for Interest (RFI)**

Dear Ms. Bradley:

The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) has reviewed BOEMRE's Request for Interest (RFI) – Commercial Leasing for Wind Power on the Outer Continental Shelf Offshore Massachusetts and has three major concerns. First, there is a substantial amount of fishing in the RFI area that would very probably be prohibited near wind power structures. Second, the area includes essential fish habitat (EFH) for many Council-managed species and there is a potential for substantial adverse effects on EFH from wind energy projects. Finally, the Council is concerned that the regional approach for ecosystem-based coastal and marine spatial planning through the establishment of regional planning bodies outlined in Executive Order 13547 has not been followed in developing the RFI area.

**Fishing activity in RFI area**

The RFI area includes active and important fishing grounds for species including but not limited to cod, winter flounder, yellowtail flounder, monkfish, herring and includes extremely valuable grounds for Atlantic sea scallops (see enclosed maps). The area also includes a number of species not managed by the New England Council but that are important to New England and Mid-Atlantic fisheries. It is not possible, however, for the Council to provide detailed data on fishing in the area in the short time frame provided comments; therefore, we recommend that BOEMRE obtain detailed information on species distribution, fishing effort and fishing revenues derived from the RFI area directly from the National Marine Fisheries Service and include this information in all future documents, particularly in relevant NEPA documents. Additionally, although there is an EFH protection area within the RFI area that is currently closed to some fishing, designation of this area is subject to change and it could become a more active fishing area in the future.

### **Essential Fish Habitat**

The Council agrees with the comments of the National Marine Fisheries Service that the RFI area encompasses EFH for a broad range of federally managed species, and that due to potentially substantial adverse effects on EFH from wind energy, projects in the area and their accompanying NEPA documents should include an expanded EFH impact assessment.

### **Need for a regional approach for ecosystem-based coastal and marine spatial planning**

The Council believes that wind energy siting issues should be addressed through the appropriate regional planning bodies to identify competing uses before designating an area for possible wind energy development. At present, the Council has a number of questions including how the RFI area was identified. Could BOEMRE explain the extent to which wind power siting off Southeastern Massachusetts is coordinated with national marine spatial planning initiatives and the degree to which that planning has been and will be transparent?

What approaches were used for identifying the “areas of interest”, minimizing conflicts with and impacts to existing uses and resources and to develop measures for reconciling use conflicts with fisheries? What are BOEMRE’s expectations and intent regarding commercial fishing in wind power sites?

Finally, BOEMRE should formally involve the New England Fishery Management Council in siting initiatives to benefit from the Council’s knowledge of fisheries locations, their importance to the fishing industry and fishery management plan restrictions on fishing activities. We do appreciate that a representative from your agency will attend our April 26-28 Council meeting and look forward to a further exchange of information and comments.

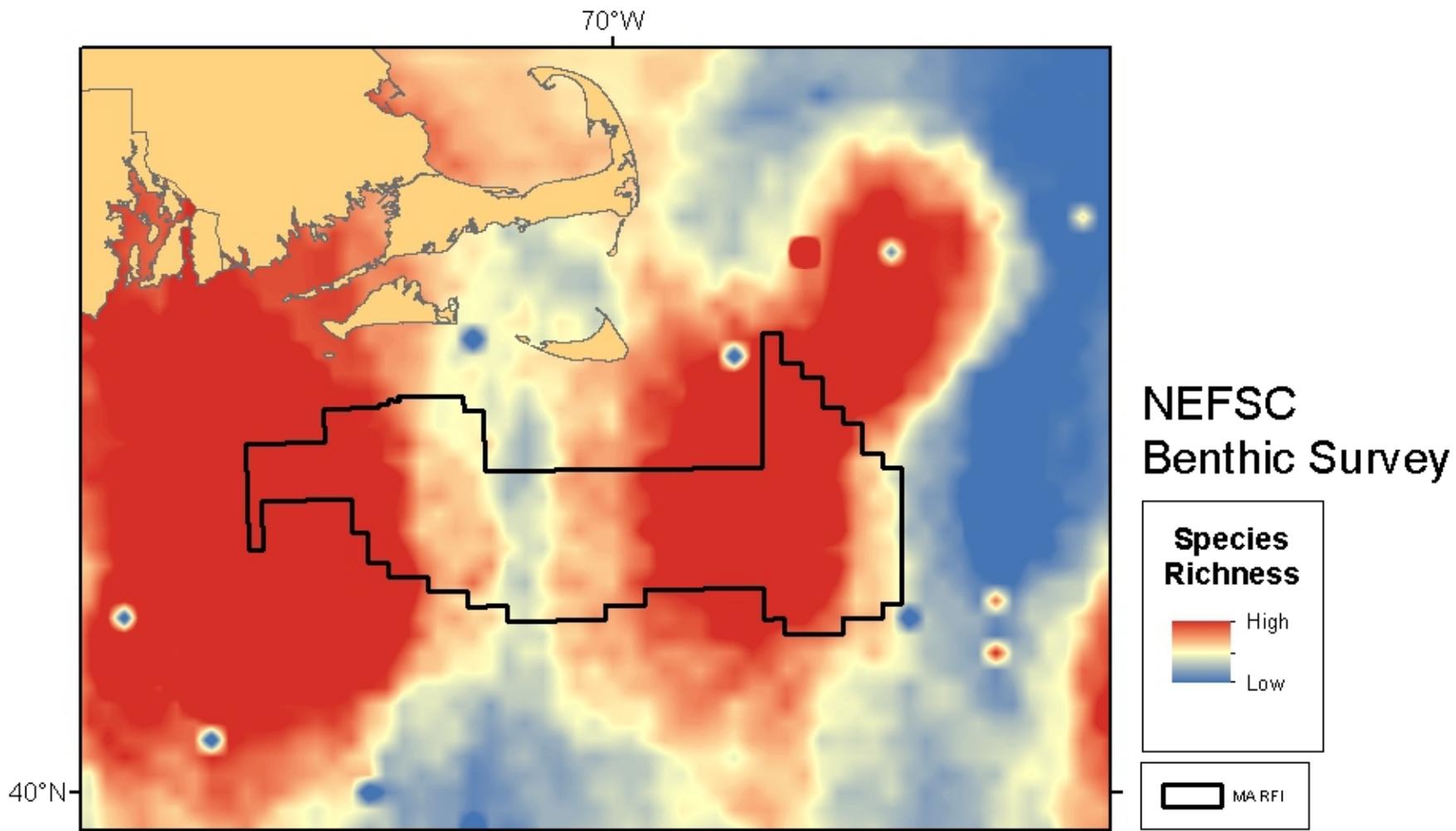
Please feel free to contact our Executive Director, Paul Howard, if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

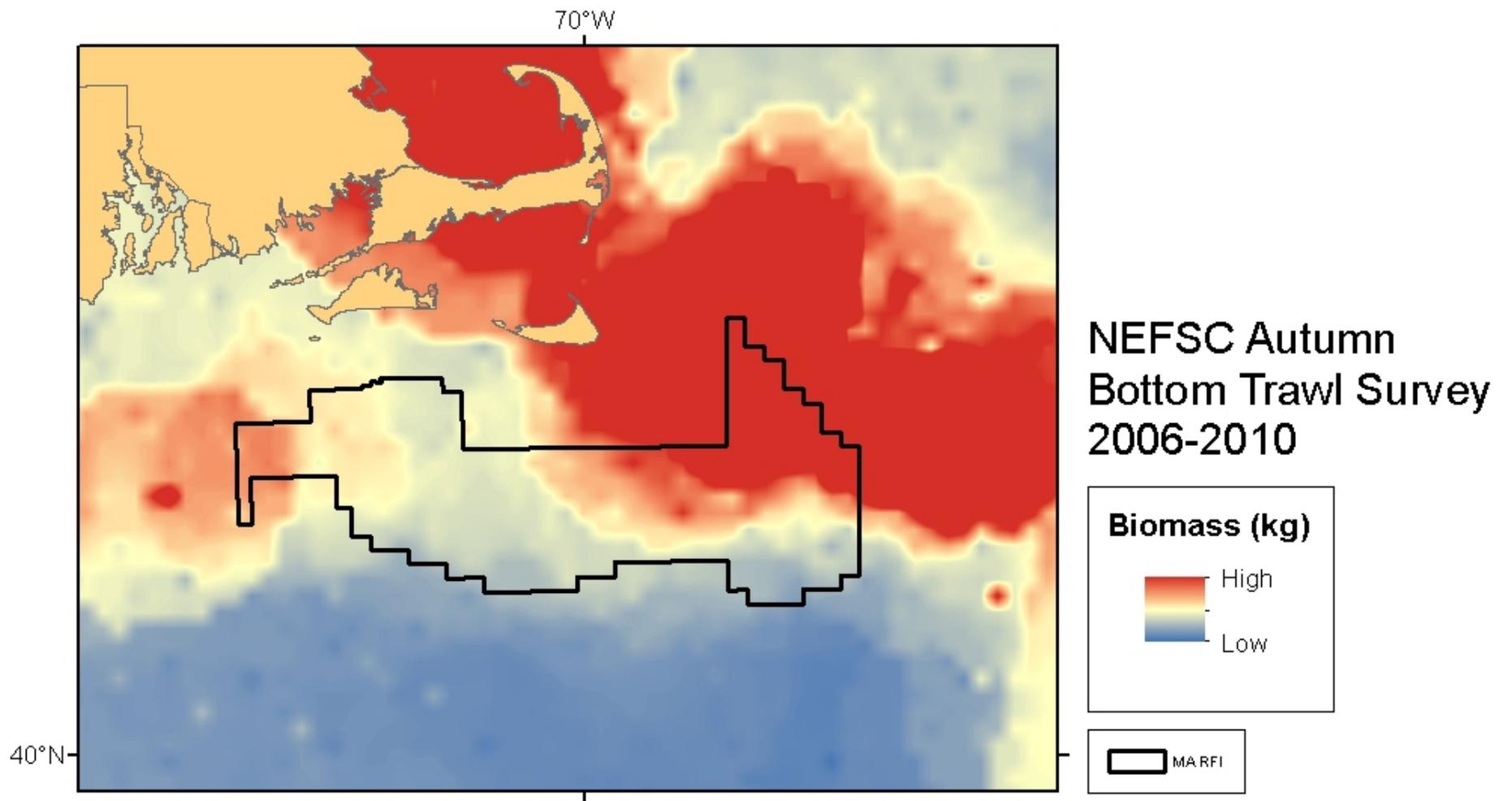


John Pappalardo  
Chairman

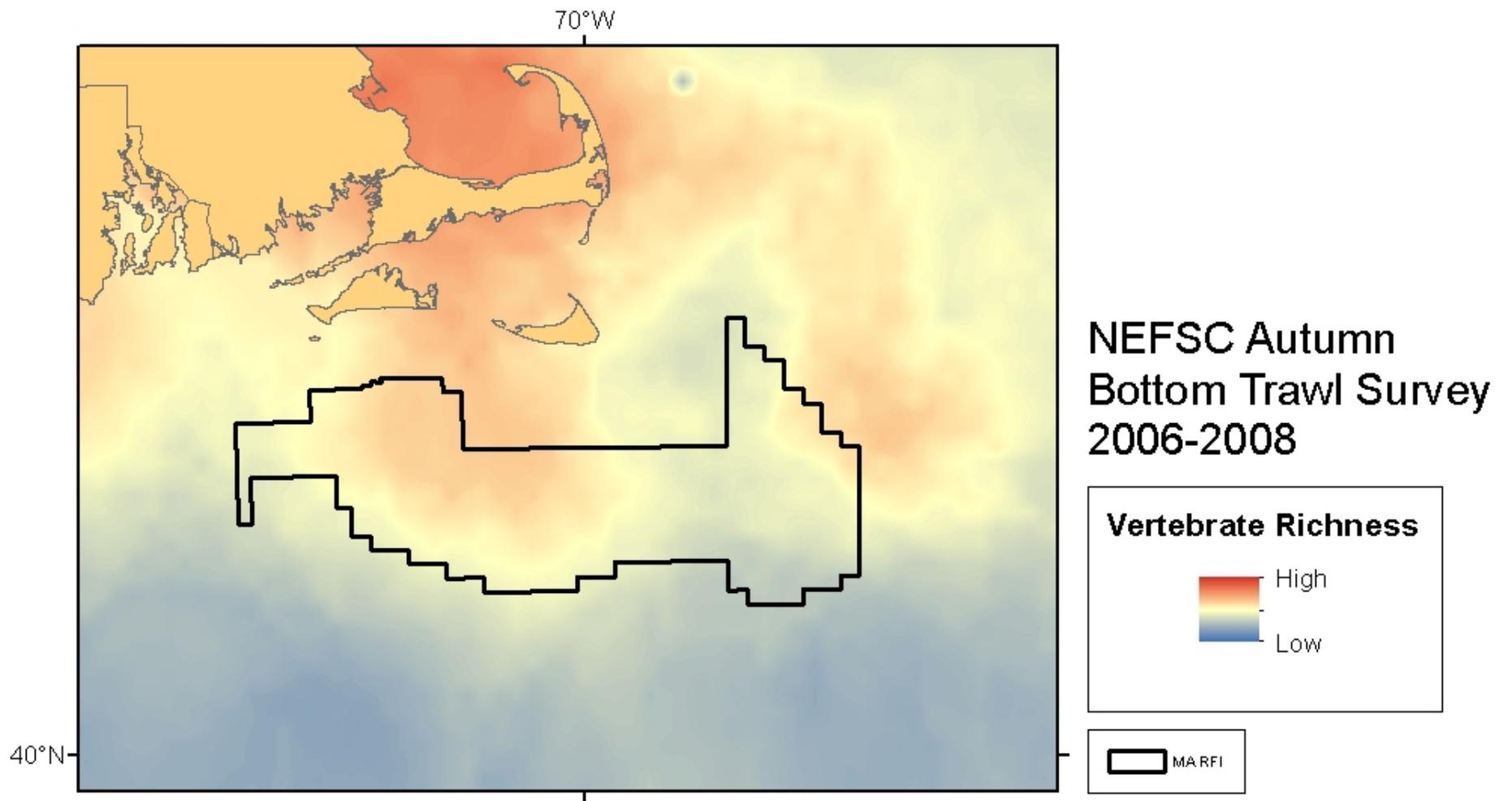
enclosure



NEFSC Ecosystem Assessment Program



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