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Seminar Presentation Abstract

## **Fishing Communities and Offshore Wind**

A study of stakeholder perceptions of the offshore wind industry in the  
Mid-Atlantic Region

Offshore wind power has been gaining traction worldwide as a feasible option for meeting CO<sub>2</sub> reduction goals and renewable energy integration targets. Countries in Europe have been installing offshore wind turbines for over a decade in the North and Baltic Seas, and the United States Department of Energy has set renewable energy goals that may be met with large scale, offshore wind development. Furthermore, the mid-Atlantic has been identified as a probable location for the first generation of projects with the “Smart from the Start” Initiative by the US Department of the Interior.

However, offshore wind energy generation is not without challenges. Environmental impacts and space use conflicts are among the main issues facing this nascent industry. Among the numerous users of the ocean, fishing areas and offshore wind development have a natural spatial conflict. In many areas, commercial and recreational fishing are considered historical trades that have been economically beneficial and socially accepted for generations. Conflict between the fishing communities and offshore wind industry has been a public affair in Europe and the United States, with the fishing community voicing opposition and concern for access to historic fishing grounds that may be subject to offshore wind development.

In order to accommodate for ocean use conflicts in the planning for offshore wind and to minimize such conflicts, several European countries and US States have implemented a Marine Spatial Planning process to map ocean uses, both human and biological, and have made recommendations for the siting of renewable energy projects. How these uses will be balanced and conflicts resolved in the mid-Atlantic region remains to be seen. This research intends to focus on the fishing communities in the mid-Atlantic and answer substantive questions of stakeholder support or opposition to offshore wind development and on what grounds has the support or opposition been formed. The policy implications of this research will help to identify ways in which use conflicts at sea may be minimized or preempted by regulators and whether stakeholder engagement can contribute to the formation of public acceptance of offshore wind.