



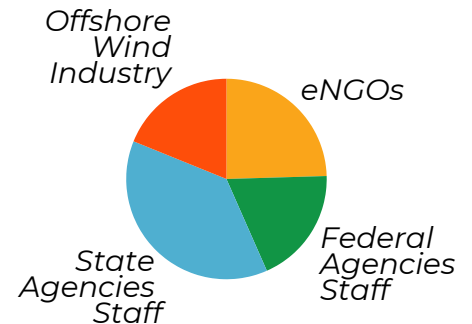
Offshore Wind & Wildlife Funding Strategy Action Plan

The first Annual Offshore Wind & Wildlife Funding Strategy Meeting convened by RWSC in September 2024 provided the forum for funders of offshore wind and wildlife research to share information with each other and RWSC so that data collection and research conducted in the upcoming year is coordinated and results in high quality data that fills current data needs.

This Action Plan summarizes the state of ongoing and planned offshore wind and wildlife research and describes specific objectives for RWSC, funders, and all Sector Caucus members to advance collaborative research in the coming year.

Attendees included members from each of RWSC’s four Sector Caucuses (Federal, State, Offshore Wind Industry, eNGO), and other regional entities including the Responsible Offshore Science Alliance and the National Offshore Wind Research and Development Consortium. Collectively, attendees represented most of the groups funding and/or requiring offshore wind and wildlife/environment data collection and research in U.S. Atlantic waters.

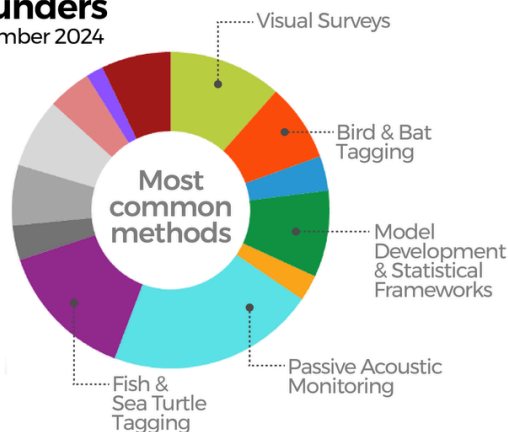
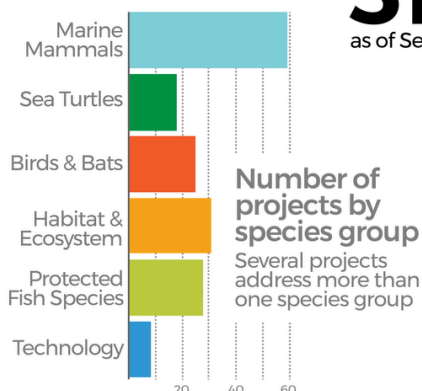
Participants by RWSC Sector Caucus



RWSC’s Synthesis of Ongoing and Planned Offshore Wind and Wildlife Research

>100 active offshore wind & wildlife data collection and research projects

31 individual funders as of September 2024



Implementing the RWSC Science Plan means developing a better understanding of the offshore wind and wildlife data landscape so that past, current, and future data are of **high quality, interoperable, discoverable, and preserved** for regional scale analyses and studies.

Sector Caucus members highlighted the value of RWSC's role and recent activities:

- Provides a trusted neutral forum for collaboration
- Promotes standardization (data, methods, planning processes)
- Facilitates data aggregation so that information is useful beyond individual projects
- Aggregates and summarizes information about what data collection and research is being funded and/or required and by whom
- Develops and maintains the Offshore Wind & Wildlife Research Database, Research Planning Map, and Data Catalog

The Sector Caucus members' goals for RWSC in the future include continuing all of the items to the left, plus:

- Assist with alignment and coordination of certain required activities and monitoring across offshore wind projects (e.g., compensatory mitigation, net benefit projects)
- Describe benefits accruing from coordinated regional efforts
- Fund regional-scale analyses of existing data
- Facilitate co-investment or pooling of funds from public and private sources into research projects.

ACTION 1 - Implement data standardization, data management, and coordination recommendations from RWSC and its Subcommittees

Sector Caucus members recognize the urgent need for standardization and coordination of data collection and support RWSC's leadership on these topics.

Several entities indicated that they had reviewed the recommended coordination language and data standards at <https://rWSC.org/research-data> and committed to using them in their work to ensure that resulting data are interoperable, discoverable, and preserved for future use. RWSC will follow up with entities that did not make this commitment to understand potential roadblocks and challenges to broad uptake of recommendations and standards.

Specific data standardization, data management, and coordination action items:

- RWSC will work with Subcommittees to continue developing data-specific recommendations (e.g., formats, preferred repositories, timing) that funders can cite or incorporate in their own policies and agreements, and will post them publicly on the RWSC website.
- Federal and state agencies will review RWSC standards and recommendations and identify roadblocks to including them in permitting requirements, procurement requirements, contracts, grants, and other agreements with organizations that collect data or conduct research, and in their own offshore wind research plans or strategies.
- Offshore wind companies and private funders will review RWSC standards and recommendations and identify any roadblocks to including them in the contracts, grants, and other agreements with entities that they fund to collect data or conduct research.
- All Sector Caucus members will identify elements of the standards and recommendations that might be problematic for their organization, discuss these with RWSC, and look for solutions that ensure that their work and work that they sponsor is coordinated with RWSC and that the appropriate data are interoperable, discoverable, and preserved for future use.

ACTION 2 - Coordinate funding goals and pool funding to achieve bigger results

Multiple Caucus members recently issued Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for offshore wind-related research and will be making funding decisions in early 2025. These separate decisions will be coordinated through RWSC when:

- Funders use RWSC Subcommittee members for technical review and scoring of proposals, AND
- Funders invite RWSC staff and other funders to participate in the final panel review and selection of proposals.

These activities ensure that proposals are reviewed by appropriate experts with working knowledge of the offshore wind and wildlife research landscape and surfaces any opportunities to align projects thematically across separate funding streams and reduce redundancy in the portfolio of offshore wind research projects funded in 2025 and beyond.

Collaborative Funding Example:

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Environmental Studies Program is coordinating with NOAA Fisheries and RWSC to implement the Partnership for an Offshore Wind Energy Regional Observation Network (POWERON), the first cross-project collective monitoring program. The POWERON initiative is being funded by a combination of Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funds to BOEM as well as annual financial contributions from offshore wind projects who have elected to grant POWERON access to their lease area to conduct all activities necessary to manage the project's required long-term passive acoustic monitoring for large whales, including deployment and servicing of instruments, QA/QC of data, data processing, and long-term data archiving, consistent with RWSC recommendations. The intent is for RWSC and the Marine Mammal Subcommittee to begin leading this program for BOEM in fall 2024.

Additional offshore wind and wildlife funds likely to be deployed in 2025*:

- BOEM POWERON, \$4M
- Projects to be selected by MassCEC
- Voluntary and/or required research funding associated with MA-RI-CT Tri-State offshore wind solicitation
- New Jersey Offshore Wind Research & Monitoring Initiative, \$4.75M
- Empire Wind 1 and Sunrise Wind regional monitoring required as part of NYSERDA terms and conditions
- NOAA/NFWF Vessel Strike Avoidance Fund
- Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium
- U.S. Department of Energy Research & Development Fund, \$48.6M
- National Offshore Wind Research & Development Consortium Solicitation 4.0: Innovations in Floating Offshore Wind, \$10.6M

**As of September 2024*



Sector Caucus members expressed an interest in exploring the collaborative funding of centralized monitoring and data management for several topics in the coming year.

The need is highest for collaborative approaches to:

- **Avian monitoring (tagging and Motus antenna deployment/calibration).** BOEM and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will discuss opportunities and potential funding sources to expand POWERON or develop a similar framework that creates efficiencies for bird and bat monitoring and data management.
- **eDNA.** BOEM highlighted eDNA as a data collection method for multiple species that needs regional coordination and could be added to POWERON, and perhaps piloted in the Gulf of Maine.
- **Oceanographic / hydrodynamics studies.** Leverage the National Academies' recent workshop on a field monitoring program to evaluate hydrodynamics impacts of offshore wind on Nantucket Shoals. Collaborate with developers to use their assets to deploy and maintain regional-scale monitoring of oceanographic variables.

There was also some interest in developing collaborative funding and data management models for telemetry/tagging of sea turtles and protected fish and developer-funded voluntary conservation and/or restoration activities. Sector Caucus members also acknowledged a need for collaborative funding of critical data management needs across taxa/topics informed by RWSC's assessments.

ACTION 3 - Collaborate with other Caucuses within RWSC

Sector Caucus members identified specific topics that they want to collaborate on and discuss with each other and RWSC in the coming year. RWSC will assist by gathering and synthesizing information and providing the forum for cross-Caucus meetings and workshops as needed.

- **Assess similarities and differences in offshore wind monitoring requirements among federal agencies and states.** Look for opportunities to eliminate redundancy in federal/state conditions of project approval and standardize reporting/data delivery requirements.
- **Share lessons learned among states and developers from the results of past offshore wind solicitations.** Are there opportunities to make certain requirements around monitoring and data consistent among states to streamline developers' submissions?
- **Balancing individual project needs with regional research / Science Plan goals.** Sector Caucus members noted that the urgent need for data (e.g., to satisfy a requirement or address stakeholder concerns) can be a barrier to implementing regional collaboration. Is data standardization one way to future-proof individual project activities where regional collaboration is impractical?
- **Advocate for federal funding of RWSC.** In the past, members of the eNGO and Offshore Wind Industry Caucuses cosigned letters to congressional leadership to encourage the inclusion of funding for regional coordination through RWSC in federal agency budgets. Caucus members may meet to discuss and plan similar communications and/or meetings with legislators.