



ANNUAL WORK PLAN

FY 2026 (JULY 1, 2025 – JUNE 30, 2026)



This Annual Work Plan for the Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative (RWSC) is based on assumptions and descriptions expressed in the Stakeholder Vision for a Regional Wildlife Science Entity and priorities articulated in the RWSC Science Plan. The Annual Work Plan has three parts:

1. **RWSC Annual Work Plan (pp. 1-6)** – a standing list of tasks that RWSC staff are responsible for, the RWSC components (e.g., Steering Committee, Sector Caucuses, Subcommittees) that will guide and/or assist with those tasks, and the estimated frequency of those activities.
2. **Specific projected actions and milestones for the current fiscal year (pp. 7-9)** (July 1 – June 30) in addition to or associated with the general tasks described in the Annual Work Plan. A document like this is produced during each year’s annual planning.
3. **Progress on actions and milestone from the previous fiscal year (pp. 10-11)**

RWSC Annual Work Plan

The purpose of this Annual Work Plan is to outline the broad bins of responsibilities of NROC, MARCO, and CSSF staff in launching and implementing the RWSC. This Annual Work Plan describes six broad ongoing tasks. Each year, more specific actions that will be required within each of these tasks are projected and progress from the previous year is reported (see pages 9-10). The Annual Work Plan is meant to assist RWSC members and stakeholders in tracking the types of activities that RWSC undertakes and the approximate frequency of those activities.

TASK 1 MANAGE STAFF AND CONTRACTORS; COORDINATE WITH PARTNERS AND OTHERS

Subtask	Frequency
1. Manage staff and contractors; coordinate with partners (e.g., RWSC member entities, regional IOOS, ROSA) on staffing	Ongoing
2. Staff meetings and regular coordination with other NROC/MARCO contractors including on marine life and regional data portals	Weekly
3. Coordinate with regional IOOS associations, ROSA, NOWRDC, and others	Monthly / As needed

TASK 2 PURSUE AND MAINTAIN FUNDING COMMITMENTS FOR OPERATIONS BUDGET

Subtask	Frequency
1. Maintain, renew, and grow funding agreements with member entities	Ongoing



TASK 3 ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS

The [RWSC Governance Structure](#) follows the initial [Stakeholder Vision](#) developed with the assistance of Cadmus/CBI. Refer to the RWSC Governance Structure for frameworks and terms of reference for the three main components below.

A. STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee includes equal representation of the four Sectors. Representatives are selected by the Sector Caucuses. It provides guidance and direction for process and procedure of the RWSC overall, including to the Director and Subcommittees. Steering Committee members agree to the terms of the Steering Committee Charter.

Subtask	Frequency
1. Convene regular meetings	At least quarterly and as needed
2. Communicate and coordinate with Steering Committee members outside of regular meetings	As needed
3. Review Governance Structure, Conflicts of Interest Policy, Harassment Policy	Annually each July
4. Review pending and ongoing research funded by RWSC member entities with Steering Committee	Ongoing
5. Review each Sector Caucus's membership with Steering Committee members from each Sector	Annually / As needed
6. Review expert Subcommittee membership with Steering Committee members	Annually / As needed
7. Provide Steering Committee opportunities to review RWSC work products	Ongoing

B. SECTOR CAUCUSES

Sector caucuses involve standing meetings and listserv discussions within sectors (e.g., industry, state government, federal government, and non-governmental environmental organizations). Sector Caucuses provide input to the Steering Committee to ensure progress on strategic research topics. Each sector has developed its own Framework to guide the creation and use of their caucus including a clear definition of leadership, membership, and participation in that caucus.

Subtask	Frequency
1. Review Sector Caucus charters (with Steering Committee)	Annually / As needed
2. Convene regular Sector Caucus meetings (with Steering Committee)	Biannually



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| 3. Review pending and ongoing research with each Sector | Ongoing |
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C. SUBCOMMITTEES

These are the core entities that identify key gaps and needs, scope initial research concepts initially, and help maintain alignment between ongoing research and the gaps and needs of the RWSC. Subcommittees are convened as needed.

Subtask	Frequency
1. Maintain and review Subcommittee membership lists and invite members based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pending and ongoing research - Participation lists from recent wildlife research/monitoring workshops and meetings - NROC-MARCO Marine Life Work Groups - Steering Committee and Sector Caucus input 	Ongoing / As needed

TASK 4 PRIORITIZE AND SUPPORT REGIONAL RESEARCH

Subtask	Frequency
1. Convene Subcommittees to address research needs and to develop a Science Plan that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Existing research frameworks and strategies b. Recommended data collection strategies that coordinate with ongoing/existing regional-scale research c. Taxa-specific lists of wildlife research priorities based on recent workshops, meetings, working groups, and emerging needs d. Data collection/standardization protocols 	Ongoing



e. Data storage best practices	
f. Guidance for research prioritization across taxa	
g. Scopes for projects that address gaps and needs	
2. Facilitate regional research and funding:	Ongoing
a. Assist with scoping research projects that address Science Plan recommendations	
b. Facilitate discussions about implementing funding and funding strategies with Steering Committee	
c. Coordinate with funders of regional wildlife research with Steering Committee	
d. Manage research funds and projects in alignment with the Science Plan	
3. Obtain funding commitments for research and/or support other entities in obtaining research funding	Ongoing
4. Track progress implementing the Science Plan	Ongoing / Annually
5. Update the Science Plan at regular intervals	Every 5 years / 10 years

TASK 5 MAINTAIN SORTABLE DATABASE OF ONGOING PENDING WILDLIFE RESEARCH, MONITORING EFFORTS, PUBLICATIONS, AND DATASETS

Subtask	Frequency
6. Develop, maintain, and make available a sortable database for continual review by Steering Committee, Sector Caucuses, and Subcommittees	Ongoing
7. Coordinate with researchers, research funders, and regional data portals to disseminate spatial data related to research activities (e.g., survey footprints and locations of data collection; eventually results/data products)	Ongoing



TASK 6 REGULARLY COMMUNICATE PROGRESS AND ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS

Subtask	Frequency
1. Regular staff attendance at stakeholder and partner meetings (e.g., state working groups, ROSA Advisory Committee meetings, industry conferences)	As needed / Ongoing
2. Build an email list and periodically provide updates on RWSC activities	Ongoing
3. Regularly post information and updates on a public website	Ongoing
4. Issue a public Annual Report to communicate progress	Annually
5. Convene Annual Science Meeting	Annually



Projected actions and milestones for the upcoming FY (2026; July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026) in addition to or associated with the general tasks described in the Annual Work Plan (Annual Work Plan Task noted in parentheses)

Timeline	Actions and milestones
1st Quarter <i>July - September 2025</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Committee (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve and begin implementing FY 26 Annual Work Plan and Funding Plan Plan annual Research Funding Strategy Meeting Select Regional Research Projects (Empire Wind 1) Sector Caucuses (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist with identifying funds and developing funding plans for research and data collection activities recommended in the Science Plan, with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bird and bat tracking Acoustic telemetry Oceanography/glider deployments Review database of ongoing and planned research and data collection activities to ensure that efforts funded by each Caucus are represented Subcommittees (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Science Plan implementation – implement Subcommittee 2025 Work Plans Track Science Plan progress Assist with the selection of Regional Research projects (Empire Wind 1) Implement POWERON and ensure participation/awareness of all partners (POWERON funds) Support Regional Research (Task 4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competitively select regional research projects and develop agreements that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update analysis of seabird to displacement and collision and start power analysis to inform regional scale displacement studies (Empire Wind 1) Determine/characterize potential effects of offshore structures on oceanographic/hydrodynamic processes and marine ecology (Empire Wind 1) Determine/characterize any changes in baleen whale distributions and/or acoustic behavior across the Atlantic OCS and whether this change was due to offshore wind development (POWERON) Support the public RWSC Research Planning Map (Task 5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support coordination with researchers and funders to disseminate spatial data for research planning
2nd Quarter <i>October – December 2025</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Committee (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee POWERON and Regional Research Projects (Empire Wind 1) Sector Caucuses (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist with identifying funds and developing funding plans for research and data collection activities recommended in the Science Plan, with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bird and bat tracking Acoustic telemetry Oceanography/glider deployments Review database of ongoing and planned research and data collection activities to ensure that efforts funded by each Caucus are represented Subcommittees (Task 3)



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ With MTS, ROSA, RI SeaGrant, URI, cohost a Fisheries & Benthic Monitoring TechSurge, Oct 8-9, 2025 ○ Support Science Plan implementation – implement Subcommittee 2025 Work Plans ○ Track Science Plan progress ○ Implement POWERON and ensure participation/awareness of all partners (POWERON funds) ○ Provide the forum for updates from Regional Research selected projects; provide feedback on project plans as needed ○ Finalize an assessment of data repositories and recommendations for enhancing wildlife/environment data workflows • Support Regional Research (Task 4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Finalize Data Management & Sharing Plans and spend plans for each selected Regional Research Project ○ Report progress to funders, Steering Committee, Sector Caucuses, and Subcommittees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Update analysis of seabird to displacement and collision and start power analysis to inform regional scale displacement studies (Empire Wind 1) ▪ Determine/characterize potential effects of offshore structures on oceanographic/hydrodynamic processes and marine ecology (Empire Wind 1) ▪ Determine/characterize any changes in baleen whale distributions and/or acoustic behavior across the Atlantic OCS and whether this change was due to offshore wind development (POWERON) • Support the public RWSC Research Planning Map (Task 5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue to support coordination with researchers and funders to disseminate spatial data for research planning
3rd Quarter <i>January – March 2026</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering Committee (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Oversee POWERON and Regional Research Projects (Empire Wind 1) • Sector Caucuses (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assist with identifying funds and developing funding plans for research and data collection activities recommended in the Science Plan, with a specific focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bird and bat tracking ▪ Acoustic telemetry ▪ Oceanography/glider deployments ○ Review database of ongoing and planned research and data collection activities to ensure that efforts funded by each Caucus are represented • Subcommittees (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support Science Plan implementation – implement Subcommittee 2025 Work Plans ○ Track Science Plan progress ○ Implement POWERON and ensure participation/awareness of all partners (POWERON funds) ○ Provide the forum for updates from Regional Research selected projects; provide feedback on project plans as needed • Support Regional Research (Task 4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implement Data Management & Sharing Plans and spend plans for each selected Regional Research Project ○ Report progress to funders, Steering Committee, Sector Caucuses, and Subcommittees:



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Update analysis of seabird to displacement and collision and start power analysis to inform regional scale displacement studies (Empire Wind 1) ▪ Determine/characterize potential effects of offshore structures on oceanographic/hydrodynamic processes and marine ecology (Empire Wind 1) ▪ Determine/characterize any changes in baleen whale distributions and/or acoustic behavior across the Atlantic OCS and whether this change was due to offshore wind development (POWERON) • Support the public RWSC Research Planning Map (Task 5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue to support coordination with researchers and funders to disseminate spatial data for research planning • Develop a brief annual report, including this year's accomplishments and next year's objectives (Task 6)
4th Quarter <i>April - June</i> 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering Committee (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Oversee POWERON and Regional Research Projects (Empire Wind 1) • Sector Caucuses (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assist with identifying funds and developing funding plans for research and data collection activities recommended in the Science Plan ○ Review database of ongoing and planned research and data collection activities to ensure that efforts funded by each Caucus are represented • Subcommittees (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support Science Plan implementation – implement Subcommittee 2025 Work Plans ○ Track Science Plan progress ○ Implement POWERON and ensure participation/awareness of all partners (POWERON funds) ○ Provide the forum for updates from Regional Research selected projects; provide feedback on project plans as needed • Support Regional Research (Task 4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implement Data Management & Sharing Plans and spend plans for each selected Regional Research Project ○ Report progress to funders, Steering Committee, Sector Caucuses, and Subcommittees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Update analysis of seabird to displacement and collision and start power analysis to inform regional scale displacement studies (Empire Wind 1) ▪ Determine/characterize potential effects of offshore structures on oceanographic/hydrodynamic processes and marine ecology (Empire Wind 1) ▪ Determine/characterize any changes in baleen whale distributions and/or acoustic behavior across the Atlantic OCS and whether this change was due to offshore wind development (POWERON) • Support the public RWSC Research Planning Map (Task 5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue to support coordination with researchers and funders to disseminate spatial data for research planning



Progress on actions and milestones during the previous FY (2025; July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025) in addition to or associated with the general tasks described in the Annual Work Plan (Annual Work Plan Task noted in parentheses)

Timeline	Actions and milestones
1st Quarter <i>July - September 2024</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Committee (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve and begin implementing FY 25 Annual Work Plan and Funding Plan Develop and finalize policies and procedures to support Research Funding Convene the first annual Research Funding Strategy Meeting – Sept 10-11, 2024 Disseminate findings/action items from the first annual Research Funding Strategy Meeting – Action Plan posted October 2024 Sector Caucuses (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to build membership, awareness, and engagement in all Sectors Assist with identifying funds and developing funding plans for research and data collection activities recommended in the Science Plan Review database of ongoing and planned research and data collection activities to ensure that efforts funded by each Caucus are represented Develop database of required monitoring that generates wildlife/environment data (federal and state) Subcommittees (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Science Plan implementation – implement Subcommittee 2024 Work Plans Track Science Plan progress Support DOE, BOEM, NOAA Workshop Series on Whale Detection Technologies Support Regional Research (Task 4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in NYSEDA State of the Science; Mini TechSurge and RWSC presentations Finalize draft agreements for POWERON and Regional Research Funding (Empire Wind 1) Begin selecting Regional Research RFP topics Launch the public RWSC Research Planning Map (Task 5) – July 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold webinar(s) to share information about the Map and collect feedback about features/functions Continue to support coordination with researchers and funders to disseminate spatial data for research planning
2nd Quarter <i>October – December 2024</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Committee & Sector Caucuses (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop database of required monitoring that generates wildlife/environment data (federal and state) Begin developing RFP review and proposal review and selection processes Subcommittees (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin developing 2025 Work Plans Support Science Plan implementation Track Science Plan progress Support DOE, BOEM, NOAA Workshop Series on Whale Detection Technologies Update and maintain the public RWSC Research Planning Map (Task 5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support coordination with researchers and funders to disseminate spatial data for research planning



3rd Quarter <i>January – March 2025</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Committee & Sector Caucuses (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final review of POWERON and Regional Research RFPs Finalize proposal review and selection processes Finalize and review database of required monitoring that generates wildlife/environment data (federal and state) Subcommittees (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and finalize 2025 Work Plans Support Science Plan implementation Track Science Plan progress Update and maintain the public RWSC Research Planning Map (Task 5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support coordination with researchers and funders to disseminate spatial data for research planning
4th Quarter <i>April - June 2025</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a specific actions, milestones, and funding plan for FY 2026 (Task 2) – April 2025 Issue membership invoices to support FY 2026 operations (Task 2) Steering Committee & Sector Caucuses (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in review and selection of POWERON and Regional Research awardees Subcommittees (Task 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize 2025 Work Plans Support Science Plan implementation Track Science Plan progress Support Regional Research (Task 4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct technical proposal review for POWERON and Regional Research (Empire Wind 1) Conduct proposal review/selection approval processes with Steering Committee for POWERON and Regional Research (Empire Wind 1) Award POWERON contract and negotiate with awardee