American Albacore Fishing Association, Inc.

June 28, 2022

Dr. Whitney Hauer
BOEM Office of Strategic Resources
760 Paseo Camarillo (Suite 102)
Camarillo, CA 93010

Re: BOEM-2022-0009 - Call for Information and Nominations – Offshore Oregon

Dear Dr. Hauer:

The American Albacore Fishing Association (AAFA) and Western Fishboat Owners Association (WFOA) offer the following comments related to the Call for Information and Nominations - Commercial Leasing for Wind Energy Development on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Offshore Oregon (Call Notice). Particularly, the two Offshore Wind (OSW) Call Areas off the coast of Oregon – the Coos Bay Call Area and the Brookings Call Area. At the outset, we agree with the comments submitted by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC). The PFMC encourages BOEM to consider waters deeper than 1,300 meters (710 fathoms). We would further request that there be ten to fifteen miles buffers identified and established around undersea banks, sea mounts and deep-water canyons where the albacore fishery tends to operate.

The North Pacific albacore (NPA) fishery operating off the U.S. West Coast was the first tuna fishery, worldwide, to achieve MSC certification. AAFA and WFOA share that certificate to this date. The NPS fishery is prosecuted by vessels using troll gear as well as pole and line gear. Between 2012 and 2020, an average of 570 vessels participated in this important fishery, catching

10,300[1] metric tons generating roughly $38.4M in ex-vessel revenues[2] annually[3]. Each of these vessels are small businesses, many family-owned, that provide jobs and economic benefits to fishing communities up and down the west coast. Assuming a crew of four, that equates to roughly 2,300 jobs. When one considers the land-based jobs which support our activities, whether it be live bait operations, processing facilities, fuel docks, marine mechanics, etc, that number is surely much higher.

Our memberships span the coast from San Diego, California to Bellingham, Washington. Our fishery is highly mobile and our members harvest albacore in waters off all three states. Our fishery typically operates offshore, in deeper waters around seamounts, canyon edges and banks. Both of the Call Areas have historic importance to the albacore fishery, especially the Coos Bay Call Area. The OROWind map tool shows the importance of that area both the commercial fishery and local charter boat fleet based in and around Coos Bay.

Given that the NPA fishery will be directly impacted by both Oregon Call Areas, it is disappointing that nobody from BOEM has reached out to either AAFA or WFOA. We are forced to react to a planning process which should have included our participation early in the process. A couple of our members and representatives participated in the recent meetings convened by the Midwater Trawlers Cooperative and the Oregon Trawl Commission; but a majority who would have liked to have participated were either on the water beginning their 2022 season or preparing their vessels for departure. The following are representative of comments offered by our members on the two Call Areas:

- "The Coos Bay Call Area is going to be ABSOLUTELY devastating to the albacore fishery. A few years ago the fleet was all 20-30 miles off the beach and the fish hung out right in the middle of the call area for month and half to 2 months. Additionally, transit in and out and avoiding the windmills to get in any 'transit lane' while potentially having to drive a heavy full boat in the trough in rough seas, as it is a lot off Coos Bay, so I can get to any transit lane is something I doubt has been thought of."

- "Looking at the call areas for OSW they don't seem to care about any fishery .The albacore fishery operates in these areas almost every year we fish the banks and inside the banks chasing large bird schools which will be devastated by OSW. We have to run through all of these areas to get our catch to market. This will devastate

[1] See PFMC Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) documents, Table 5 - Number of vessels and landings (round mt) in the West Coast albacore surface hook-and-line (troll and baitboat) fishery.

[2] Ex-vessel revenues represent the dollars paid to the vessels and does not represent the true economic value of our catch to the dependent fishing communities. The total economic value of our fishery, including the downstream benefits, is surely in the hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

[3] See PFMC Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) documents, Table 6 – Real (inflation adjusted) ex-vessel revenue for the West Coast albacore surface hook-and-line (troll and baitboat) fishery.

the albacore fishery, the birds which we depend on to find the fish, cost us fuel to go around and drive another nail in the coffin of American fisheries all the while putting money in the pockets of unregulated foreign fisheries that take advantage of our markets. There has to be a better way"

- "It seems to me there's a bunch of big unknowns. Are the platforms going to be considered FADs? How large of an area will be closed off around them, for travel and also fishing? There's the big unknown of will the fish be attracted to them and effectively be removed from the fishery? Could be totally devastating if they are and they all hang out there; but the area is closed to fishing. Haven't heard the answers to any of these questions. I guess they are going to lease our ocean to foreigners for billions and then answer the questions later after we've already been screwed and it's a done deal."

- "The impact of closing zones to a highly migratory species fishery is immeasurable. The possibility of killing and changing marine birdlife migration patterns is also a large concern. This whole process feels very rushed!"

- "What is the impact not only on schools of HMS target species, but their prey as well, while vessels perform extended geophysical surveys towing equipment to map the sea floor."

- "What are impacts on whale migration? While the commercial crab fishery which is heavily impacted by these areas also is being forced to comply with very restrictive gear regulations. The layout of the OSW farms are far more of a threat to whales than crab pots ever were. But who has to bear the brunt of mitigation efforts?"

The Call Notice includes the following statement, "In the future, vessel monitoring system data and other datasets will be used to identify important fishing ground(s) for fisheries relevant to the Call Areas." At the outset, only a small portion of the NPA fishery, those that possess high seas permits, are required to have VMS. Given that, what other datasets are you planning to utilize to identify important fishing grounds to the NPA fishery[4]? Given the shortcomings of the VMS and the commercial albacore data in the OROWindmap tool, conversations with the fleet(s) seem necessary.

More importantly, shouldn't BOEM have identified important fishing grounds **before** publishing the Call Areas? Of the three Call Areas off California, the Humboldt Call Area was not modified

[4] The OROWindmap tool commercial albacore dataset is federal logbook data and is for vessels that fished off the Oregon coast, not just landed in Oregon. During the same 2012 – 2020 time frame used above, the average compliance rate for logbooks in the NPA fishery was 79%. Logbook coverage rates are based on the ratio of trip landings weights recorded in logbooks to the sum of landings from PacFIN and foreign ports.

before becoming a Wind Energy Area (WEA); the Morro Bay WEA is larger than the original Call Area identified in 2018; and the Diablo Canyon Call Area, which presented national security concerns, still remains in inventory. The fishing industry does not have faith that BOEM will do anything with later derived data in planning for OSW off the state of Oregon. We hope we are proven wrong; and to that end we ask BOEM engage with the albacore fleet before any decisions are made on Wind Energy Area designations.

In the Call Notice, BOEM requests specific and detailed comments on eleven "features, activities, or concerns in or around the Call Areas". We address a few of those below.

a. Geological, geophysical, and biological conditions

The biological conditions of both Call Areas have long supported a economically important NPA fishery. Conditions for nutrient delivery are such that feed aggregates in those areas and albacore are drawn to those areas to feed. Albacore are drawn to the U.S. west in the summer and fall.

d. Other uses of the OCS in or near the Call Areas, particularly with regard to vessel navigation. Additional information regarding recreational and commercial fisheries including, but not limited to, the use of the areas, the fishing gear types used, seasonal use, and recommendations for reducing use conflicts.

We covered much of the above. We want to reiterate that each of these Call Areas could cause significant impacts to vessel navigation resulting in increased risk to our members and their vessels. Not only challenges getting to and from Port; but also navigational hazards operating near the Call Areas, should they be developed. Our vessels do not anchor up at night, they drift and are at the mercy of the ocean conditions – weather and current.

In terms of reducing conflicts, we recommend no WEAs be identified off Oregon. Given the likelihood of that not happening, we strongly recommend that BOEM engage with the NPA fishery in an effort to understand how our fishery operates so that we can work together in an effort to reduce conflicts. This may include ten to fifteen miles buffers identified and established around undersea banks, sea mounts and deep-water canyons where the albacore fishery tends to operate. We also strongly recommend that safe transit lanes to and from the fishing grounds be established utilizing prevailing weather conditions during the summer and fall months. We don't fault BOEM for not understanding how the fishery operates, we do fault BOEM for not making any efforts to gain that understanding before publishing the Call Areas.

e. Available and pertinent data and information concerning renewable energy resources and environmental conditions.

We comment here only to point out that there is not much data and information on how floating OSW will impact environmental conditions. We are fearful that OSW, when deployed, will impact

upwelling off the U.S. west coast. Upwelling being a primary driver of productivity in the California Current. This is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the lack of information. We strongly recommend that additional information be gathered to give assurances to our members, and the community at large, that OSW wont destroy the ecological function of the California Current that we, and all fisheries, depend upon.

f. Information relating to visual resources and aesthetics, the potential impacts of wind turbines to those resources, and potential strategies to help mitigate or minimize any visual effects.

A 2022 study prepared by the National Academy of Sciences found that "there is currently no standard system of active radar tailored to a wind turbine generator environment." The study came to two conclusions; one reads, "Wind turbines in the maritime environment affect marine vessel radar in a situation-dependent manner, with the most common impact being a substantial increase in strong, reflected energy cluttering the operator's display, leading to complications in navigation decision-making." An industrial sized wind farm will likely impact the U.S. Coast Guard's search and rescue missions. Our member's, and their crew, safety should be of paramount importance, even to BOEM.

j. Information on coastal or onshore activities needed to support offshore wind development, such as port and transmission infrastructure, and associated potential impacts to recreation, scenic, cultural, historic, and natural resources, relating to those activities.

We assume it was a mere oversight to fail to include potential impacts to commercial activities from the list. We further assume there will be increased demand for harbor and port space for vessels and activities in support of OSW. There is limited space in the ports and harbors adjacent to the Call Areas. We are concerned that we may lose dockage and shoreside facilities (offloading facilities, etc) that support our operations. Having to travel hundreds of miles to offload, or get bait, or get fuel, will add expenses, time and increase our carbon footprint.

k. Any other relevant information BOEM should consider during its planning and decision-making process for the purpose of identifying areas to lease in the Call Areas.

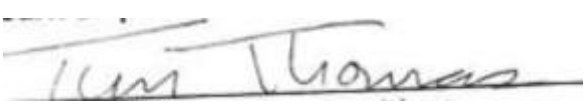
We are also concerned about the close proximity of the southern boundary of the Brookings Call Area to the northern boundary of the Humboldt Wind Energy Area. We are unaware of any cumulative impact analysis of siting these two Areas so close to one another. We respectfully request that a cumulative impact analysis on all fishing activity be completed at the earliest opportunity; but no later than when any Wind Energy Areas are identified withing the Brookings Call Area.

In closing, we reiterate the verbal comments delivered by Dan Waldeck of the Pacific Whiting Conservation Cooperative during the meetings held during the week of June 14.

"We heard BOEM state that they don't know the economic impacts from fishery displacement nor the downstream effects on coastal communities. BOEM doesn't know the environmental impacts to fish stocks, protected resources, nor the California Current Large Marine Ecosystem. BOEM doesn't know how critical fisheries research will be disrupted or lost; BOEM doesn't know how OSW arrays will affect safety and life at sea; BOEM doesn't know where the power will go nor what it will cost consumers. Under all of that uncertainty, BOEM has not said that they will slow down to provide time to collect the necessary data and analyze these impacts. It appears the process will move forward, solely under BOEM's discretion. What concerns all of us is that BOEM is not mandated to avoid and minimize these impacts nor are they required to account for them. BOEM is only required to 'consider.' Given the enormity of what is at stake, that is not enough."

Please contact us for further questions and information.

Kindest regards,



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