



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**®
New England District

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FISHERIES STUDIES

In order to evaluate potential project effects on finfish resources and commercial and recreational fisheries in Nantucket Sound for inclusion in the EIS, the following issues and scope of studies have been reviewed and discussed by inter-agency (federal and state) staff and cooperating agencies:

Finfish Resources: Evaluations and assessments of finfish resources in Nantucket Sound are being conducted through detailed literature reviews and consultation with federal and state agencies. Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MDMF) spring and fall research trawl data from 1990 to 2001 were obtained and will be analyzed. Trends and catch per unit effort (CPUE) will be analyzed seasonally and annually. The data will also be used to evaluate occurrence of various species at each of Cape Wind's proposed alternative sites. In addition, statistical evaluations of the data will be performed to determine whether relative abundance of fish species at Cape Wind's proposed alternative sites are significantly different. In accordance with the Magnuson Stevens Act, an Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Assessment for designated species and life stages in the proposed and alternative sites in Nantucket Sound will also be included in the EIS. Consultation with the New England Fishery Management Council is included in the EFH Assessment.

Commercial Fisheries: Commercial fisheries data from 1990 to 2001 were obtained from statistical areas covering Nantucket Sound using databases from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and MDMF.

- *NMFS Commercial Data:* In the Northeast prior to 1994, fishery statistics were collected through a voluntary reporting system. Fish landings and price information were collected by NMFS port agents at the point of initial sale of the catch through dealer reports or "weigh out" receipts. These data are often referred to as "weigh out" data. In 1994, this voluntary weigh out reporting was replaced with a mandatory reporting system which is still used today. The mandatory system involves fishermen submitting logbooks of their catch, called "vessel trip reports." This system is used in all fisheries subject to federal fishery management plans except for American lobster and Atlantic herring fisheries. Since NMFS commercial fisheries data prior to and after 1994 are based on two different reporting methodologies, "weigh out" data (1990 through 1993) will be analyzed separately from "vessel trip report" data (1994 through 2001). The EIS will include an analysis of total annual catch as well as species-specific annual catch and gear types used by fishermen.
- *MDMF Commercial Data:* MDMF also maintains an extensive commercial database for lobster, shellfish, and other regulated fisheries throughout Massachusetts. These data are compiled from catch reports submitted by licensed fishermen. The MDMF commercial database provides information based on fishery: gillnet, fish weir, striped bass, fish pot, lobster, and shellfish. The EIS will include an analysis of landings reported from the MDMF commercial datasets which will be evaluated annually for all species and fishery type.

Recreational Fisheries: An evaluation of recreational fishing in Nantucket Sound is being conducted using existing recreational fisheries data and a telephone intercept survey as summarized below:

- NMFS recreational data from 1990 to 2001 were obtained from the NMFS Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) for the three counties surrounding Nantucket Sound (Dukes, Barnstable, and Nantucket). Results and trends will be analyzed by method of fishing, hours fished, gear type used, catch reported by the angler, catch observed by the interviewer, and species observed by the interviewer.
- To supplement the recreational data obtained from the NMFS MRFSS program, a recreational intercept survey was conducted in the summer of 2002 to obtain site-specific information on recreational fishing effort and abundance of recreational fish species in Nantucket Sound and in the vicinity of Cape Wind's proposed alternative sites. A telephone recreational intercept survey was developed using the general methods and approach from the NMFS MRFSS program. The survey targeted captains of charter or party boats and included companies located on Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. The purpose of the survey was to collect data on recreational fishing effort in Nantucket Sound. The survey questions covered a range of topics relevant to local fishing including the frequency with which the survey respondents visited certain areas of Nantucket Sound, the preferred fish species, the most frequently caught species, and the months of the year that most species are caught. Results of this survey will be included in the EIS.

Observations of Fishing Vessel Activity: Beginning in the summer of 2001, observations of fishing vessels or other vessels and their location in Nantucket Sound have been recorded. These observations have been and continue to be recorded during each aerial survey, vessel transect or other scientific research activity in the Project Area conducted as part of ongoing field investigations or operations.