

STUDY TITLE: Evaluation of visual impact on cultural resources/historic properties.

REPORT TITLE: Evaluation of visual impact on cultural resources/historic properties: North Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, and Florida Straits; Technical Report of Findings.

CONTRACT NUMBER: M08DD20174

SPONSORING OCS REGION: Gulf of Mexico

APPLICABLE PLANNING AREA(S): North Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, and Florida Straits.

FISCAL YEAR(S) OF PROJECT FUNDING: 2008; 2009; 2010.

COMPLETION DATE OF REPORT: September 2010.

COSTS: FY 2008: \$25,147; FY 2009: \$190,586; FY 2010: \$83,895; CUMULATIVE PROJECT COST: \$299,628.

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KEY WORDS: North Atlantic; Mid-Atlantic; Florida Straits; visual impacts; cultural resources; historic properties; off-shore wind facilities; data collection; GIS database.

BACKGROUND: The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE) is charged with the responsibility of considering the effects of its actions on significant cultural resources/historic properties on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) of the United States, extending from State waters to the limit of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). This mandate arose from a number of laws, enacted to ensure proper management and protection of the nation's cultural heritage. The most pertinent of these are the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), as amended; and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA).

While possible impacts to cultural resources/historic properties located on the OCS have long been a focus of the BOEMRE, other possible impacts related to the development of renewable energy sources have become a concern, as well. With respect to off-shore energy facilities, one of the most important concerns is the possible impacts that these structures and lighting may have on on-shore cultural resources/historic properties. Section 106 of NHPA requires that planning for placement of off-shore energy facilities include an assessment of visual effects that the undertaking could have on buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts that are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NR). NEPA requires that planning for placement of off-shore energy facilities include an assessment of possible socio-economic impacts on cultural resources/historic properties.

OBJECTIVES: This investigation is intended to provide a baseline of cultural information that will inform preliminary planning decisions regarding renewable energy development in the Atlantic Region and assist in compliance with NHPA and NEPA with respect to the placement of off-shore energy facilities. It identifies known cultural resources/historic properties that could be visually affected, as well as publically accessible cultural resources/historic properties that could be socio-economically impacted due to diminished levels of visitation.

DESCRIPTION: A study area was defined that encompassed a continuous ca. 3,800 mi-long (ca. 6,115.5 km) coastal strip beginning at a defined shoreline and extending inland for a distance of 0.25 mi (0.4 km) (ca. 1,851 mi² [ca. 4,794.07 km²] on land) and seaward for a distance of 3 mi (4.83 km) (ca. 9,549 mi² [ca. 24,731.8 km²] at sea). Within this corridor, information was collected from a variety of sources, including the National Register Information System (NRIS), the State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) of 13 coastal states, local municipalities, other government agencies, and state and federally recognized Native American tribes. Cultural resources/historic properties data were codified into 27 basic attributes that addressed various aspects of identity, location, status, size, ownership, type, age, function, accessibility, public visitation, and setting.

SIGNIFICANT CONCLUSIONS: A total of 9,600 known cultural resources/historic properties were addressed. Of this total, 9,175 were considered to have a historically significant maritime setting, and 1,108 were considered to have a historically significant view toward the open sea. Publically accessible resources with significant maritime settings were field-visited, and representative, geospatially-linked, digital photographs were taken of selected resources and from such resources toward the open sea. Public visitation data were collected for 61 resources.

STUDY RESULTS: Standardized information about known cultural resources/historic properties within the study area was assembled in a Microsoft Access database and Environmental Sensitivities Research Institute (ESRI) shapefiles containing spatial data. These file types are proprietary yet standard file types that can be easily integrated into the BOEMRE Coastland Offshore Resource Information System (CORIS). The user is provided a Digital Video Disc (DVD) containing the database, shapefiles, and a copy of ESRI ArcGIS Explorer. This program, once installed, will allow browsing of the spatial data on a background of aerial photographs or U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) quadrangle maps.

STUDY PRODUCT(S): Klein, J. I., W. M. Tankersley, R. Meyer, G. C. Smith, and W. J. Chadwick. 2011. Evaluation of visual impact on cultural resources/historic properties: North Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, and Florida Straits; Technical report of findings. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, New Orleans, LA. OCS Study BOEMRE 2011-000. 24 pp., 10 appendices, and DVD (2.969 GB).

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