Protected Species Project Criteria for the Oil and Gas Program in the Gulf of America

April 2026

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Attachment 2: The Bureaus' Marine Debris Project Criteria

A.2 Marine Debris

Marine debris poses a threat to fish, marine mammals, sea turtles, and potentially other marine animals; causes costly delays and repairs for commercial and recreational boating interests; detracts from the aesthetic quality of recreational shore fronts; and increases the cost of beach and park maintenance. The discharge of garbage and debris has been the subject of strict laws, such as MARPOL-Annex V and the Marine Debris Act, 33 U.S.C. 1951 et seq., and regulations imposed by various agencies including the United States Coast Guard (USCG) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

These protocols will be implemented by BOEM, BSEE, and lessees in complying with the ESA (16 U.S.C. §§ 1531-1544) and MMPA (16 U.S.C. §§1361- 1423h). The BOEM/BSEE proposed action under the 2025 NMFS BiOp includes robust avoidance or minimization measures (i.e., protocols), and those measures will continue to be implemented as project criteria under the 2026 Endangered Species Committee Order.

A.2.1 Definitions

Marine debris means as any object or fragment of wood, metal, glass, rubber, plastic, cloth, paper or any other solid, human-made item or material that is lost or discarded in the marine environment by the Lessee while conducting oil and gas activities on the OCS in connection with a lease, grant, or approval issued by BOEM.

A.2.2 Protocol

A.2.1.1 Marine Debris Placards

The permit holders must post placards that include each of the information text boxes in Attachment 2 (Section A.2.4) of this Project Criteria in prominent places on all vessels, offshore training or orientation areas engaged in oil and gas operations in the Gulf of America OCS or where activity occurs. Each of the placards depicted, with the language specified, must be displayed on a 5x8 inch format or larger. One or more areas may be omitted if there is insufficient space. These notices must be referenced, and their contents explained, during any initial orientation given on the vessel. Placards must be sturdy enough to withstand the local environment and must be replaced when damage or wear compromises readability.

A.2.1.2 Marine Debris Training and Certification Process

All vessel operators, employees, and contractors performing OCS activities on behalf of the lessee must complete marine debris awareness training annually. The training consists of two parts:

1. viewing a marine debris training video or slide show (described below); and
2. receiving an explanation from management personnel that emphasizes their commitment to the requirements.

The marine debris training videos, training slide packs, and other marine debris related educational materials may be found at https://www.bsee.gov/debris and https://www.ooctraining.org/. The training videos, slides, and related material may be downloaded directly from the website.

Lessees engaged in oil and gas activities must continue to develop and use a marine debris awareness training and certification process that reasonably assures that they, and their respective employees, contractors, and subcontractors are, in fact, trained.

The training process must include the following elements:

1. A viewing of either the video or the slide show by the personnel specified above;
2. An explanation from the management that conveys the commitment of the company to achieve the objectives of the debris containment requirement;
3. Attendance measures (initial and annual); and
4. Recordkeeping and availability of records for inspection by BSEE.

Training Report: By January 31st of each year, the lessee must provide BSEE with an annual report (1–2 pages) signed by a company official that describes your marine debris awareness training process, number of people trained, estimated related costs, and certifies that the training process has been followed for the previous calendar year. You should send the report and any questions concerning compliance by email to marinedebris@bsee.gov. In lieu of emailing the report, you may send a printed copy to:

Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement
Environmental Compliance Division - Gulf of America Section
1201 Elmwood Park Blvd.
New Orleans, Louisiana 70123

A.2.3. Marine Debris Marking and Securing

Marking: Materials, equipment, tools, containers, and other items used in OCS activities which could be lost or discarded overboard must be clearly marked with the vessel or facility identification. All markings must clearly identify the owner and must be durable enough to resist the effects of the environmental conditions to which they may be exposed.

Securing: Materials, equipment, tools, containers, and other items used in OCS activities which could be lost or discarded overboard must be properly secured to prevent loss overboard.

1. Marine Debris Incidents

Recovery: Lessees must recover marine debris that is lost or discarded in the marine environment while performing OCS activities. If the marine debris is located within the boundaries of a potential archaeological resource and/or avoidance area, or a sensitive ecological and/or benthic resource area, the Lessee must contact BSEE for approval prior to conducting any recovery efforts that could impact the seafloor. The Lessee must enact steps throughout its OCS program to prevent similar incidents and must submit a description of these actions to BSEE in the Recovery Report below.

48-Hour Report: Lessees must submit a report to BSEE within 48 hours of a marine debris incident via marinedebris@bsee.gov. The "48-Hour Report" must describe recovery efforts or explain in detail if the Lessee determined that debris recovery is not warranted because (a) conditions are unsafe; (b) debris is insignificant and unrecoverable because it has floated away or sunk to the seafloor; or (c) debris is insignificant and immediate recovery is cost prohibitive. If conditions are unsafe, recovery must be attempted when conditions become safe. The Lessee must recover the marine debris lost or discarded if BSEE does not agree with the reasons provided by the Lessee to be relieved from the obligation to recover the marine debris. The 48- Hour Report must also include the following:

a) project identification and contact information for the lessee, operator, and/or

contractor;

b) the date and time of the incident;

c) the lease number, OCS area and block, and coordinates of the object's location (latitude and longitude in decimal degrees);

d) a detailed description of the dropped object to include dimensions (approximate length, width, height, and weight), composition (e.g., plastic, aluminum, steel, wood, paper, hazardous substances, or defined pollutants), and whether it floats or sinks in seawater;

e) pictures, data imagery, data streams, and/or a schematic/illustration of the object, if available;

f) indication of whether the lost or discarded item could be a magnetic anomaly of greater than 50 nanotesla (nT), a seafloor target of greater than 0.5 m, or a sub-bottom anomaly of greater than 0.5m when operating a magnetometer or gradiometer, side scan sonar, or sub-bottom profiler in accordance with BOEM's and BSEE's applicable guidance;

g) an explanation of how the object was lost; and a description of immediate recovery efforts and results, including photos.

Recovery Plan: The Lessee must submit a "Recovery Plan" to BSEE via marinedebris@bsee.gov if marine debris is not recovered in 48 hours and BSEE determines that recovery is warranted. If BSEE does not object to an assertion in the 48-Hour Report that recovery is not warranted, then a Recovery Plan is not needed. The Recovery Plan must be submitted no later than 10 calendar days from the date in which the incident occurred and must detail a plan to recover the debris within 30 days from the date in which the incident occurred. Unless otherwise objected to by BSEE within 48 hours of the filing of the Recovery Plan, the Lessee can proceed with the activities described in the Recovery Plan. The Lessee must request and obtain approval of a time extension if recovery activities cannot be completed within 30 days from the date in which the incident occurred.

Recovery Report: The Lessee must submit a "Recovery Report" to BSEE via marinedebris@bsee.gov within 10 calendar days from the date in which the recovery activities are completed. The Recovery Report must inform BSEE whether the debris has been recovered, a description of the recovery activities, and any substantial deviation from recovery activities as proposed in the Recovery Plan. The Lessee must describe steps enacted throughout all the Lessee's OCS leases to prevent similar incidents. If recovery was performed within 48 hours and described in the 48-Hour Report, or recovery is unwarranted, a Recovery Report is not required.

Decommissioning Application: Information on unrecovered marine debris must be included and addressed in the description of the site clearance activities provided in the decommissioning application required under 30 CFR § 285.906.

A.2.2 Marine Debris Placards

WHAT IS MARINE DEBRIS?

Marine debris is any object or fragment of wood, metal, glass, rubber, plastic, cloth, paper or any other man-made item or material that is lost or discarded in the marine environment. Marine debris may be intentionally dumped, accidentally dropped, or indirectly deposited.

Whatever the source, marine debris is a direct result of human activities on land and at sea. Depending upon its composition, marine debris may sink to the seafloor, drift in the water column, or float on the surface of the sea. Certain debris, such as plastics, can persist for hundreds of years in the marine environment without decomposing.

WARNING!

YOUR ACTIONS MAY SUBJECT YOU TO SEVERE LEGAL CONSEQUENCES!

The disposal and/or discharge of any solid waste anywhere in the marine environment (other than ground-up food particles) is strictly prohibited by U.S. Coast Guard and Environmental Protection Agency regulations. THIS INCLUDES MATERIALS OR DEBRIS ACCIDENTALLY LOST OVERBOARD.

The disposal of equipment, cables, chains, containers, or other materials into offshore waters is prohibited by the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (30 CFR 250.300(b)(6)). THIS INCLUDES MATERIALS OR DEBRIS ACCIDENTALLY LOST OVERBOARD.

ATTENTION!

MARINE DEBRIS MAY CAUSE SEVERE ECOLOGICAL DAMAGE!

Marine debris discarded or lost from offshore and coastal sources may injure or kill fish, marine mammals, sea turtles, seabirds, and other wildlife.

Thousands of marine animals, including marine mammals, sea turtles and seabirds, die every year from being entangled in fishing line, strapping bands, discarded ropes and nets and plastic six-pack rings. Additionally, unknown numbers of marine animals die each year from internal injury, intestinal blockage, and starvation as a result of ingesting marine debris.

Marine debris fouls boat propellers and clogs water intake ports on engines thereby endangering the safety of fishermen and boaters and resulting in heavy loss of time and money.

Marine debris detracts from the aesthetic quality of recreational beaches and shorelines and increases the cost of park and beach maintenance.

ATTENTION!

SECURE ALL LOOSE ARTICLES!

NMFS now expects petroleum industry personnel to pick up and recover any articles lost overboard from boats and offshore structures as safety conditions permit. Additionally, 30 CFR 250.300(d) requires recording and reporting items lost overboard to the District Manager through facility daily operations reports.

Protect marine animals, as well as your valuable time and money, by doing the following to prevent accidental loss of these items:

Properly securing all materials, equipment, and personal belongings. Articles such as hardhats, life vests, sunglasses, cigarette lighters, parts bags, buckets, shrink wrap, strip lumber, and pipe thread protectors become marine debris when lost overboard.

Making sure that all trash receptacles have tight fitting lids and that the lids are used.

Providing and using secure cigarette butt containers. Cigarette butts are one of the most common forms of marine debris. Many cigarette butts contain some form of plastic and do not decompose in the ocean. Cigarette butts pose a major threat to marine wildlife as they resemble food and cause gut blockages and starvation when ingested.

Do your part to eliminate marine debris. Encourage others to be responsible about marine debris by making suggestions to secure potential marine debris on your boat or structure or by participating in a beach cleanup.

Attachment 3: The Bureaus' Vessel Strike Avoidance and Injured and/or Dead Aquatic Protected Species Reporting Project Criteria

A.3 **Vessel Strike Avoidance and Injured and/or Dead Aquatic Protected Species Reporting Project Criteria**

These protocols that are considered project criteria because they were implemented as part of NMFS 2025 BiOp proposed action will be required by BOEM, BSEE, and provide guidelines to operators in complying with the ESA (16 U.S.C. §§ 1531-1544) and MMPA (16 U.S.C. §§1361-1423h). The BOEM/BSEE proposed action under the 2025 NMFS BiOp includes robust avoidance or minimization measures (i.e., protocols), and those measures will continue to be implemented as project criteria under the 2026 Endangered Species Committee Order. The measures contained herein apply to all vessels associated with the federally regulated oil and gas program in the Gulf of America.

A.3.1 **Aquatic Protected Species Identification**

Crew and supply vessel personnel should use a Gulf of America reference guide that includes identifying information on marine mammals, sea turtles, and other marine protected species (i.e., species that are not marine mammals and ESA- listed such as Gulf sturgeon, giant manta ray, or oceanic whitetip shark; hereafter collectively termed "other aquatic protected species") that may be encountered in the Gulf of America OCS or anywhere activity occurs. Vessel operators must comply with the below measures except under extraordinary circumstances when the **safety of the vessel or crew is in doubt or the safety of life at sea is in question**.

A.3.2 **Vessel strike avoidance**

1. Vessel operators and crews must maintain a vigilant watch for all aquatic protected species and slow down, stop their vessel, or alter course, as appropriate and regardless of vessel size, to avoid striking any protected species. A single aquatic protected species at the surface may indicate the presence of submerged animals in the vicinity of the vessel; therefore, precautionary measures should always be exercised. A visual observer aboard the vessel must monitor a vessel strike avoidance zone (species-specific distances detailed below) around the vessel according to the parameters stated below, to ensure the potential for strike is minimized. Visual observers monitoring the vessel strike avoidance zone can be either third-party observers or crew members (e.g., captain), but crew members responsible for these duties must be provided sufficient training to distinguish aquatic protected species to broad taxonomic groups, as well as those specific species detailed further below.
2. Vessel speeds must also be reduced to 10 knots or less when mother-calf pairs, pods, or large assemblages (greater than three) of any marine mammal are observed near a vessel.
3. All vessels must maintain a minimum separation distance of 100 m from sperm whales, and 500 m from any baleen whale to specifically protect the Rice's whale. If the species is indistinguishable, then operators should assume it is a Rice's whale and act accordingly.
4. All vessels must, to the maximum extent practicable, attempt to maintain a minimum separation distance of 50 m from all "other aquatic protected species" including sea turtles and manatees, with an exception made for those animals that approach the vessel.
5. When aquatic protected species are sighted while a vessel is underway, the vessel should take action as necessary to avoid violating the relevant separation distance (e.g., attempt to remain parallel to the animal's course, avoid excessive speed or abrupt changes in direction until the animal has left the area). If aquatic protected species are sighted within the relevant separation distance, the vessel should reduce speed and shift the engine to neutral, not engaging the engines until animals are clear of the area. This does not apply to any vessel towing gear (e.g., source towed array and site clearance trawling).

6. All vessels 20 m (65 ft) or greater in support of oil and gas activities must have a functioning AIS onboard and operating at all times as required by the USCG. Even if the USCG does not require AIS for the vessel, it is strongly encouraged. At minimum, the reporting (as specified) must be followed and include trackline (e.g., time, location, and speed) data with Automatic Identification System (AIS) Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) numbers, if available.

The above requirements do not apply in any case where compliance would create an imminent and serious threat to a person or vessel or to the extent that a vessel is restricted in its ability to maneuver and, because of that restriction, is unable to comply.

A.3.3 **Injured and/or dead protected species reporting**

At all times, vessel operators must report sightings of any injured or dead aquatic protected species as soon as possible but no greater than 24 hours, regardless of whether the injury or death was caused by the operator's vessel. If the injury or death was caused by a collision with the operator's vessel, the operator must immediately report the incident to the appropriate NMFS contact below for 24-hour response. The operator must further notify BOEM, BSEE, and NMFS immediately of the strike by email to protectedspecies@boem.gov and protectedspecies@bsee.gov and takereport.nmfsser@noaa.gov. The report must include the following information:

1. Name, telephone number, and email of company providing the report;
2. The vessel name at time of activity;
3. The lease number;
4. Time, date, and location (latitude and longitude [lat/long]) of the incident;
5. Species identification (if known) or description of the animal(s) involved;
6. Vessel's speed during and leading up to the incident;
7. Vessel's course/heading and what operations were being conducted (if applicable);
8. Status of all sound sources in use;
9. Description of avoidance measures/requirements that were in place at the time of the strike and what additional measures were taken, if any, to avoid strike;
10. Environmental conditions (e.g., wind speed and direction, Beaufort Sea State, cloud cover, visibility) immediately preceding the strike;
11. Estimated size and length of animal that was struck;
12. Description of the behavior of the marine mammal immediately preceding and following the strike;
13. If available, description of the presence and behavior of any other marine mammals immediately preceding the strike;
14. Estimated fate of the animal (e.g., dead, injured but alive, injured and moving, blood or tissue observed in the water, status unknown, disappeared); and
15. To the extent practicable, photographs or video footage of the animal(s).

A.3.4 **Incidents requiring immediate reporting**

Review of your proposed activities identified use of equipment that has the potential for entanglement and/or entrapment of protected species (i.e., species protected under the ESA and/or MMPA) that could be present during operations. In case of entrapment, procedures and measures for reporting are dependent upon the situation at hand.

Certain scenarios or incidents require immediate reporting to Federal agencies; these are

described below. Should any of the following occur at any time, **immediate reporting** of the incident is required after personnel and/or diver safety is ensured:

- Entanglement or entrapment of a protected species (i.e., an animal is entangled in a line or cannot or does not leave a moon pool of its own volition).
- Injury of a protected species (e.g., the animal appears injured or lethargic).
- Interaction or contact with equipment by a protected species.
- Any observation of a leatherback sea turtle within a moon pool (regardless of whether it appears injured, or an interaction with equipment or entanglement and/or entrapment is observed).

As soon as personnel and/or diver safety is ensured, any of the incidents listed above must be reported to NMFS by contacting the appropriate expert for 24-hour response. If an immediate response is not received, the operator must keep trying until contact is made. Any failed attempts should be documented. Contact information for reporting is as follows:

- Marine mammals: contact WHALE HELPLINE at 877-942-5343.
- Sea turtles: contact NMFS Veterinary Medical Officer at 352-283-3370. If no answer, contact 301-310-3061. This includes the immediate reporting of any observation of a leatherback sea turtle within a moon pool.
- Other protected species (e.g., giant manta ray, oceanic whitetip shark, or Gulf sturgeon): contact the ESA Section 7 biologist at 301-427-8413 (nmfs.psoreview@noaa.gov) and report all incidents to takereport.nmfs@noaa.gov.

The report must include the following information:

1. Time, date, water depth and location (latitude/longitude) of the first discovery (and updated location information if known and applicable);
2. Name, type, and call sign of the vessel in which the event occurred;
3. Equipment being used at time of observation;
4. Species identification (if known) or description of the animal(s) involved;
5. Approximate size of animal;
6. Condition of the animal(s) during the event and any observed injury and/or behavior;
7. Photographs or video footage of the animal(s), if able; and
8. General narrative and timeline describing events that took place.

After the appropriate contact(s) have been made for guidance and/or assistance as described above, the operator may call BSEE at 985-722-7902 (24 hours/day) for questions or additional guidance on recovery assistance needs (if still required) and continued monitoring requirements. The operator may also contact this number if a timely response from the appropriate contact(s) listed above were not received. Minimum post-incident reporting includes all information described above in addition to the following:

9. NMFS liaison or stranding hotline that was contacted for assistance;
10. For moon pool observations or interactions:
11. Size and location of moon pool within vessel (e.g., hull door or no hull door);
12. Whether activities in the moon pool were halted or changed upon observation of the animal; and
13. Whether the animal remains in the pool at the time of the report, or if not, the time and date the animal was last observed.

Post-incident reporting should be made to BOEM/BSEE and NMFS (protectedspecies@boem.gov, protectedspecies@bsee.gov, takereport.nmfsser@noaa.gov).

Attachment 4: The Bureaus' Vessel Transit within the Rice's Whale Area as identified in the 2020 Biological Opinion's Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (2020 RWA)

Revised Protocol A.6

A.6 **Vessel Transit within the Rice's Whale Area as identified in the 2020 Biological Opinion's Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (2020 RWA)**

Operators or their recognized representative must follow requirements below as appropriate when transiting through the Rice's Whale Area as identified in the 2020 Biological Opinion's Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (2020 RWA; see figure below) when this transit is associated with either an initial plan/application or as part of a change to an existing plan/application when either vessel route and/or support base changes. The BOEM/BSEE proposed action under the 2025 NMFS BiOp includes robust avoidance or minimization measures (i.e., protocols), and those measures will continue to be implemented as project criteria under the 2026 Endangered Species Committee Order.

If transiting through any portion of the 2020 RWA, the BOEM Permit/Plan holder must submit a Post Transit Report upon completion to fulfil the reporting requirements as stated below to BOEM and BSEE (protectedspecies@boem.gov and protectedspecies@bsee.gov). Please be advised that changes to the use of a support base may trigger a revised plan (e.g., 30 CFR § 550.283), revised application, or modified permit (for geological and geophysical [G&G] activities). In the revised plan, application or permit, operators are required to follow the requirements defined in the NMFS 2025 BiOp proposed action, per the ESA Committee Order.

1. In the 2020 RWA, vessel operators and crews must maintain a vigilant watch for Rice's whales at all times and slow down, stop their vessel, or alter course, as appropriate and regardless of vessel size, to avoid striking any Rice's whale. Visual observers monitoring the 500 m vessel strike avoidance zone for Rice's whales can be either third-party observers or crew members (e.g., captain), but crew members responsible for these duties must be provided sufficient training to distinguish aquatic protected species to broad taxonomic groups, as well as those specific species detailed further below. If the species is indistinguishable, then operators should assume it is a Rice's whale and act accordingly (see below).

Figure depicting a Rice's whale

2. After completing transit through the 2020 RWA, you must prepare within seven (7) days a Post Transit Report describing the time the vessel entered and departed the 2020 RWA, any Rice's whale sightings or interactions (e.g., vessel avoidance) that occurred during transit, and any other marine mammal sightings or interactions. Post Transit Reports must be submitted to protectedspecies@boem.gov and protectedspecies@bsee.gov. The subject line of the email should include "Post Transit

Report through 2020 RWA". Minimum reporting information is described below:

a. The plan, permit or other BOEM or BSEE number used to identify the activity;
b. Port used for mobilization and demobilization;
c. Automatic Identification System (AIS) including Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) numbers, if available;
d. Time and date vessel entered and exited the 2020 RWA;
e. Time, date, water depth, and location (latitude/longitude) of the first sighting of the animal;
f. Name, type, and call sign of the vessel in which the sighting occurred;
g. Species identification (if known) or description of the animal involved;
h. Approximate size of animal (if known);
i. Condition of the animal during the event and any observed injury / behavior (if known);
j. Photographs or video footage of the animal, if available;
k. General narrative and timeline describing the events that took place;
l. Time and date vessel departed 2020 RWA;
m. Trackline (e.g., time, location, and speed) of vessel while within 2020 RWA; and
n. Environmental conditions, including Beaufort Sea State (BSS) and any other relevant weather conditions including cloud cover, fog, sun glare, and overall visibility to the horizon.

3. All vessels, regardless of size, must observe a 10-knot, year-round speed restriction in the 2020 RWA. The only exception to the 10-knot vessel speed restriction would be when observing the speed restriction would cause the safety of the vessel or crew to be in doubt or the safety of life at sea to be in question.
4. No transit is permissible through the 2020 RWA at nighttime or during low visibility conditions (e.g., BSS 4 or greater) except for emergencies (i.e., when the safety of the vessel or crew would otherwise be in doubt or the safety of life at sea is in question).
5. All vessels must maintain a minimum separation distance of 500 m from Rice's whales. If a whale is observed but cannot be confirmed as a species other than a Rice's whale, the vessel operator must assume that it is a Rice's whale and take appropriate action.
6. All vessels 65 feet (ft) or greater associated with oil and gas activity (e.g., source vessels, chase vessels, supply vessels) must have a functioning Automatic Identification System (AIS) onboard and operating at all times as required by the USCG. If the USCG does not require AIS for the vessel, it is strongly encouraged. At minimum, the reporting (as specified herein) must be followed and include trackline (e.g., time, location, and speed) data, with Automatic Identification System (AIS) Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) numbers, if available.
7. If an operator while operating within the 2020 RWA
   a. exceeds the 10-knot vessel speed,
   b. does not maintain a 500 m minimum separation distance from a Rice's whale, and/or
   c. conducts transit in the 2020 RWA during nighttime or during low visibility conditions (e.g., BSS 4 or greater),

   the operator must notify BSEE and BOEM by emailing protectedspecies@bsee.gov and

protectedspecies@boem.gov within 24 hours. The notification must be reported as a separate and distinct notification to the Post Transit Report with the title "Transit Deviation through 2020 RWA" in the subject line. The notification must provide a detailed explanation as to why the transit deviation occurred.

8. This Protocol does not remove or alter the need to comply with any other applicable regulatory or legal requirements with respect to vessel operations, including as outlined in A3 - *Vessel Strike Avoidance and Injured and/or Dead Aquatic Protected Species Reporting Protocols*.

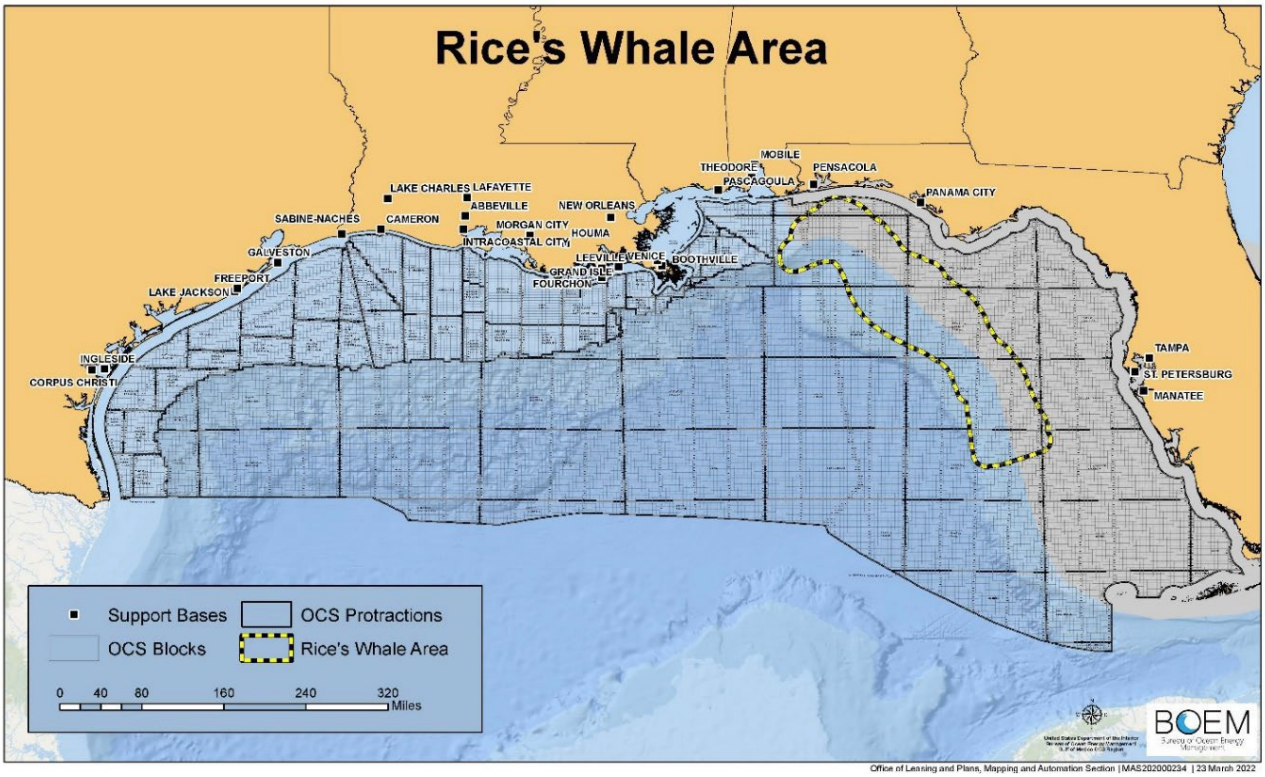

Figure depicting the 2020 RWA.

Attachment 5: The Bureaus' In-water Line Precaution Project Criteria

A.4 **In-water Line Precaution Project Criteria**

The BOEM/BSEE proposed action under the 2025 NMFS BiOp includes robust avoidance or minimization measures (i.e., protocols), and those measures will continue to be implemented as project criteria under the 2026 Endangered Species Committee Order. If operations require the use of flexible, small diameter lines to support operations (with or without divers), operators and/or contractors must reduce the slack in the lines, except for human safety considerations, to prevent accidental entanglement of protected species (i.e., species protected under the ESA and/or MMPA). This requirement includes tether lines attached to remotely operated equipment. The requirements below must be followed for any activities entailing use of flexible, small diameter lines that will not remain continuously taut, except when complying with these requirements would put the safety of divers, crew, or the vessel at risk:

- Operators must use tensioning tools and/or other appropriate procedures to reduce unnecessary looseness in the lines and/or potential looping;
- The lines must remain taut, as long as additional safety risks are not created by this action;
- A line tender must be present at all times during dive operations and must monitor the line(s) the entire time a diver is in the water; and
- Should the line tender and/or diver become aware of an entanglement of an individual protected species, the reporting requirements described above (A.3.4) must be followed as soon as safety permits.

Attachment 6: The Bureaus' Moon Pool Monitoring Project Criteria

A.5 **Moon Pool Monitoring**

The following protocol, which is now Project Criteria based on its inclusion in the NMFS 2025 BiOp proposed action would apply to all activities entailing use of the moon pool, except under circumstances when complying with these requirements would put the safety of the vessel or crew at risk. The BOEM/BSEE proposed action under the 2025 NMFS BiOp includes robust avoidance or minimization measures (i.e., protocols), and those measures will continue to be implemented as project criteria under the 2026 Endangered Species Committee Order. If any protected species (i.e., species protected under the ESA and/or the MMPA) is detected in the moon pool, you are required to follow the appropriate procedures described in *Reporting Requirements* below (see A.5.4).

Application of these measures includes, but is not limited to, dive support vessels, service vessels, pipelaying vessels, drillships, floating platforms (e.g., SPAR), mobile offshore drilling units, and other facilities with enclosed moon pools (e.g., well in the hull of a vessel, with or without a door).

A.5.1 **General requirements**

- Where the moon pools have hull doors, the operator(s) should keep the doors closed as much as reasonably practicable when no activity is occurring within the moon pool, unless the safety of crew or vessel require otherwise. This will prevent protected species from entering the confined area during periods of non-activity.
- Use of a moon pool requires regular monitoring while open to the water column and if a vessel is not underway. Regular monitoring means 24-hour video monitoring with hourly recurring checks for at least five minutes of the video feed, or hourly recurring visual checks of the moon pool for at least five minutes by a dedicated crew observer with no other tasks during that short visual check.
- If water conditions are such that observers are unable to see within a meter of the surface, operations requiring the lowering or retrieval of equipment through the moon pool must be conducted at a rate that will minimize potential harm to protected species.

A.5.2 **Closure of the hull door**

- Should the moon pool have a hull door that can be closed, then before and after closure, the moon pool must be monitored continuously by a dedicated crew observer with no other tasks to ensure that no individual protected species is present in the moon pool area. If visibility is not clear to the hull door from above (e.g., turbidity or low light), 30 minutes of monitoring is required before hull door closure.
- If a protected species is observed in the moon pool before the closure of the hull door, the hull door must not be closed, except for human safety considerations. Once the observed animal leaves the moon pool, the operator may commence closure. If the observed animal remains in the moon pool, contact NMFS or BSEE before the closure of the hull doors according to reporting requirements (see Reporting Requirements under Reporting of Observations of Protected Species within an Enclosed Moon Pool).

A.5.3 **Movement of the vessel (no hull door) and equipment deployment and/or retrieval**

- Before movement of the vessel and/or the deployment and/or retrieval of equipment, the moon pool must be monitored continuously for a minimum of 30 minutes, by a dedicated crew observer with no other tasks, to ensure no individual protected species is present in

the moon pool area.

- If a protected species is observed in the moon pool before movement of the vessel, the vessel must not be moved and equipment must not be deployed or retrieved, except for human safety considerations. If the observed animal leaves the moon pool, the operator may commence activities. If the observed animal remains in the moon pool, contact BSEE before planned movement of the vessel according to reporting requirements (see Reporting Requirements under Reporting of Observations of Protected Species within an Enclosed Moon Pool).
- Should a protected species be observed in a moon pool before activity commences (including lowering or retrieval of equipment), recovery of the animal or other actions specific to the scenario may be required from NMFS to prevent interaction with the animal. If protected species are observed during activity, only reporting is required. Operators must not take such action except at the direction of, and after contact with, NMFS.

A.5.4 **Reporting requirements**

A.2.2.1 Reporting of Observations of Protected Species within an Enclosed Moon Pool

If a protected species is observed within an enclosed moon pool and does not demonstrate any signs of distress or injury or an inability to leave the moon pool of its own volition, measures described in this section must be followed (only in cases where they do not jeopardize human safety). Although this particular situation may not require immediate assistance and reporting as described under *Incidents Requiring Immediate Reporting* (see Vessel Strike Avoidance and Injured and/or Dead Aquatic Protected Species Reporting Protocol; A.3.4), a protected species could potentially become disoriented with their surroundings and may not be able to leave the enclosed moon pool of their own volition. In order for operations requiring use of a moon pool to continue, the following reporting measures must be followed.

After 24 hours of any observation, and daily after that for as long as an individual protected species remains within a moon pool (i.e., in cases where an ESA-listed species has entered a moon pool but entrapment or injury has not been observed), the following information must be reported to BOEM and BSEE (protectedspecies@boem.gov, protectedspecies@bsee.gov):

1. For an initial report, the information should include:
   a) Time, date, water depth and location (latitude/longitude) of the first discovery (and updated location information if known and applicable);
   b) Name, type, and call sign of the vessel in which the event occurred;
   c) Equipment being utilized at time of observation;
   d) Species identification (if known) or description of the animal(s) involved;
   e) Approximate size of animal;
   f) Condition of the animal(s) during the event and any observed injury / behavior;
   g) photographs or video footage of the animal(s), if able; and
   h) General narrative and timeline describing events that took place.
2. For subsequent daily reports:
   a) Describe the animal's status to include external body condition (e.g., note any injuries or noticeable features), behaviors (e.g., floating at surface, chasing fish, diving, lethargic, etc.), and movement (e.g., has the animal left the moon pool and returned on multiple occasions?);
   b) Description of current moon pool activities, if the animal is in the moon pool;

c) Description of planned activities in the immediate future related to vessel movement or deployment of equipment;
d) Any additional photographs or video footage of the animal, if possible;
e) Guidance received and followed from NMFS liaison or stranding hotline that was contacted for assistance;
f) Whether activities in the moon pool were halted or changed upon observation of the animal; and
g) Whether the animal remains in the pool at the time of the report, or if not, the time and date the animal was last observed.

Attachment 10: The Bureaus' Sea Turtle Resuscitation Guidelines Project Criteria

A.7 **Sea Turtle Resuscitation Guidelines**

The BOEM/BSEE proposed action under the 2025 NMFS BiOp includes robust avoidance or minimization measures (i.e., protocols), and those measures will continue to be implemented as project criteria under the 2026 Endangered Species Committee Order. Any sea turtles taken incidentally during the course of oil and gas activities must be handled with due care to prevent injury to live specimens, observed for activity, and returned to the water according to the following procedures:

1. Sea turtles that are actively moving or determined to be dead (as described in paragraph (2)(iv) below) must be released over the stern of the boat. In addition, they must be released only when fishing or scientific collection gear is not in use, when the engine gears are in neutral position, and in areas where they are unlikely to be recaptured or injured by vessels.
2. Resuscitation must be attempted on sea turtles that are comatose or inactive by:
   i. Placing the turtle on its bottom shell (plastron) so that the turtle is right side up and elevating its hindquarters at least 6 inches (15.2 cm) for a period of 4 to 24 hours. The amount of elevation depends on the size of the turtle; greater elevations are needed for larger turtles. Periodically, rock the turtle gently left to right and right to left by holding the outer edge of the shell (carapace) and lifting one side about 3 inches (7.6 cm) then alternate to the other side. Gently touch the eye and pinch the tail (reflex test) periodically to see if there is a response.
   ii. Sea turtles being resuscitated must be shaded and kept damp or moist but under no circumstance be placed into a container holding water. A water- soaked towel placed over the head, carapace, and flippers is the most effective method in keeping a turtle moist.
   iii. Sea turtles that revive and become active must be released over the stern of the boat only when fishing or scientific collection gear is not in use, when the engine gears are in neutral position, and in areas where they are unlikely to be recaptured or injured by vessels. Sea turtles that fail to respond to the reflex test or fail to move within 4 hours (up to 24, if possible) must be returned to the water in the same manner as that for actively moving turtles.
   iv. A turtle is determined to be dead if the muscles are stiff (rigor mortis) and/or the flesh has begun to rot; otherwise, the turtle is determined to be comatose or inactive and resuscitation attempts are necessary.

Any sea turtle so taken must not be consumed, sold, landed, offloaded, transshipped, or kept below deck.

A.7.1 **Reporting requirements**

Incident reporting should be made to BOEM/BSEE and NMFS (protectedspecies@boem.gov, protectedspecies@bsee.gov, takereport.nmfsser@noaa.gov).