The Next Steps for Atlas Wind: Marine Surveying

Equinor is in the early stages of planning a floating offshore wind project ("Atlas Wind") off California's Central Coast. Atlas Wind has the opportunity to harness reliable wind energy, supporting California's clean energy transition while delivering economic benefits to the state. The next phase of the planning process will include marine surveying to better understand the seafloor environment within the Atlas Wind lease area, surrounding areas, and along potential cable routes.

Equinor is committed to responsible surveying and to prioritizing environmental stewardship and marine resource protection by collaborating with conservation groups, fisheries, front-line and tribal communities, among others.

Quick Facts

- Marine surveys **began in spring 2024** and will take 9-12 months to complete.
- **The survey plan calls for two vessels** (one in shallow water and one in deep water), as well as Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs) and a Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV).
- Following rigorous assessment, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, California State Water Resources Control Board, and the California Coastal Commission have reviewed and approved the planned surveying technologies, which have been determined to minimize the impact on the ocean environment and protected marine life.
- **Protective measures include visual monitoring** by trained independent professionals to avoid collisions with protected species while the vessels are underway.
- **Autonomous Underwater Vehicles** (AUVs) will carry survey equipment close to the seafloor, further **minimizing the potential for interaction with marine life.**

What Does Surveying Look Like?

A large offshore vessel (about 340 feet long) and a smaller nearshore vessel (less than 45 feet) will operate off the coast. The large vessel will operate from the port of San Francisco, and the nearshore vessel will operate from a local port.

Equinor will use high-resolution geophysical (HRG), benthic (seafloor), and geotechnical surveying technology to better understand the region's undersea landscape. This will involve non-extractive techniques (e.g. photographs), as well as extractive techniques as needed.

High resolution geophysical (HRG) surveys map the seafloor using a high frequency acoustic source. When possible, these surveys will be conducted with an Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV), which operates close to the seafloor and minimizes impacts to marine mammals and other sensitive species. Autonomous Surface Vehicles may be used in the waters nearest to shore where traditional vessels cannot operate.

Geotechnical surveys take small samples of the seafloor to better understand its structural characteristics.

Benthic habitat surveys use small samples of the seafloor to identify the species present in the sediment.

These surveying technologies are commonly used by regional academic and government entities to study geologic hazards, identify shipwrecks, and other archeological resources and locate seafloor biological communities. These organizations include California Deepwater Investigations and Groundtruthing (Cal DIG), the US Geological Survey, BOEM, and the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute.

Are There Any Adverse Impacts Expected From The Survey Activities?

Equinor has selected survey technology which will allow the project to avoid and minimize impact on the marine environment.

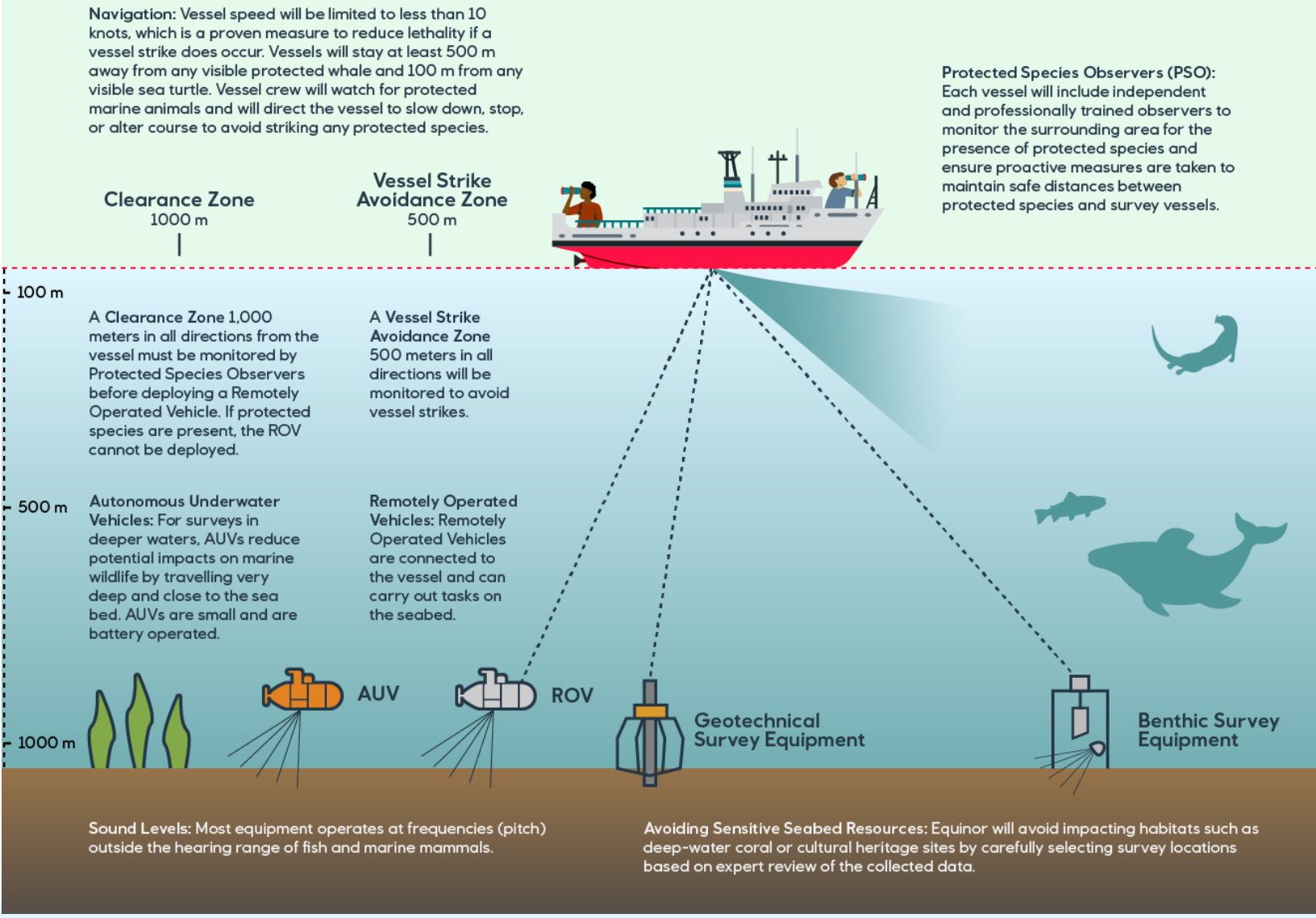
Before taking samples, the sea floor will be inspected to avoid placing equipment where sensitive habitats, tribal cultural heritage and marine archeology are present. Although surveying will disturb small areas of seafloor, this is not expected to have a significant impact on underwater life or resources.

Any potential noise impacts from the HRG surveys has been reduced to as low as reasonably practicable and has been closely examined by the regulatory authorities. **NOAA Fisheries has determined that no threatened and endangered marine mammal mortality or serious injury is expected from the HRG surveys.**

The surveys are also not expected to have an impact on air quality or birds.

How Will Marine Resources Be Protected During Surveying?

Equinor is dedicated to the coexistence of offshore wind development with wildlife and the marine environment. The offshore wind industry adheres to more stringent marine mammal mitigation measures than any other marine industry in the Pacific.



For More Information

To learn more about Atlas Wind and our commitment to sustainability and environmental protection, please visit **AtlasWind.com**.