

## Background on Guidance Documents for Risk Retirement

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As the marine renewable energy (MRE) industry progresses in the US and worldwide, concerns about the potential effects of MRE devices on marine animals, habitats, and the environment continue to be a challenge for the industry. Our understanding of the potential environmental effects of MRE development is increasing, and the ability to retire risks<sup>1</sup> allows for both the MRE industry to move forward and for research and resources to focus on studying environmental risks that may be more important. However, stakeholders continue to view MRE as a risk to the marine environment. Remaining uncertainty and perceptions of risk have led to increased scrutiny over MRE projects; long timelines for obtaining permits; and extensive, costly baseline assessments and post-installation monitoring. From engagement with the regulatory community, we have learned that resolving uncertainty requires making information available and easily accessible, and that there is a need to bridge between scientific information to formats useful for permitting processes.

The *Guidance Documents for Risk Retirement* have been developed by [OES-Environmental](#) to help make scientific information accessible and to compile tools and information for easy access. The guidance documents align scientific information within four regulatory categories relevant for MRE permitting: species and populations at risk, habitat loss or alteration, effects on water quality, and effects on social and economic systems. The guidance documents detail current understanding and existing information on environmental interactions of MRE through stressor-specific relationships and provide the regulatory context for MRE in each OES-Environmental country through country-specific documents. All information is tailored for regulators, advisors, and MRE developers to simplify the search for up-to-date information with which to address permitting requirements and concerns for MRE.

For more information and to view the guidance documents, please visit: <https://tethys.pnnl.gov/guidance-documents>. Past presentations on risk retirement and introduction of the guidance documents are also available:

- [Risk Retirement Public Webinar \(September 2020\)](#)
- [Guidance Documents Public Webinar \(September 2021\)](#)

The upcoming workshop, *Supporting Regulatory Decision-Making for Environmental Effects of Marine Renewable Energy*, will provide an interactive overview of the Guidance Documents for Risk Retirement, share additional tools to apply information on environmental effects of MRE, and seek feedback from US regulators and advisors engaged in permitting.

We look forward to engaging with you on this important topic.

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<sup>1</sup> [Risk retirement](#) is a term used to describe a process whereby environmental risks that are unlikely to cause harm to marine animals or habitats can be “retired” so that extensive investigations at every new MRE project are not required. Rather, MRE developers and regulators could rely on what is known from already consented projects, related research studies, or findings from analogous offshore industries. Risk retirement does not take the place of any existing regulatory processes, nor does it replace the need for all data collection before and after MRE device deployment; these data are often needed to verify risk retirement findings and to add to the overall knowledge base. When larger arrays of MRE devices are planned, or when new information comes to light, retired risks can be revisited.