The soft sediment community in the offshore wind lease areas

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INTRO

The most prevalent benthic habitats on the U.S. Atlantic continental shelf are soft sediment habitats. Soft sediment habitats are essential for commercial fisheries and nutrient cycling in the ocean. The imminent construction of offshore wind farms on this habitat makes it pertinent to investigate how habitat fragmentation by turbines and associated scour protection will affect soft sediment communities. This project seeks to develop a baseline from which to compare before, during, and after the construction of the wind farms.

METHODS

1. Use a Peterson grab to collect at least one sediment sample from 40 stations in and around the offshore wind lease areas.
2. Sort, count, and identify bivalves and other animals found in samples.
   a. Measure lengths of dominant or commercially important bivalves.
3. Summarize species richness and abundance for each station

NEXT STEPS

- Complete bivalve identification and compare lengths of selected bivalve species
- Finish sorting, counting, and identifying the rest of the specimens to finest possible taxonomic classification.
- Sample again in August 2023.

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PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Captured a total of 503 bivalves across all stations.

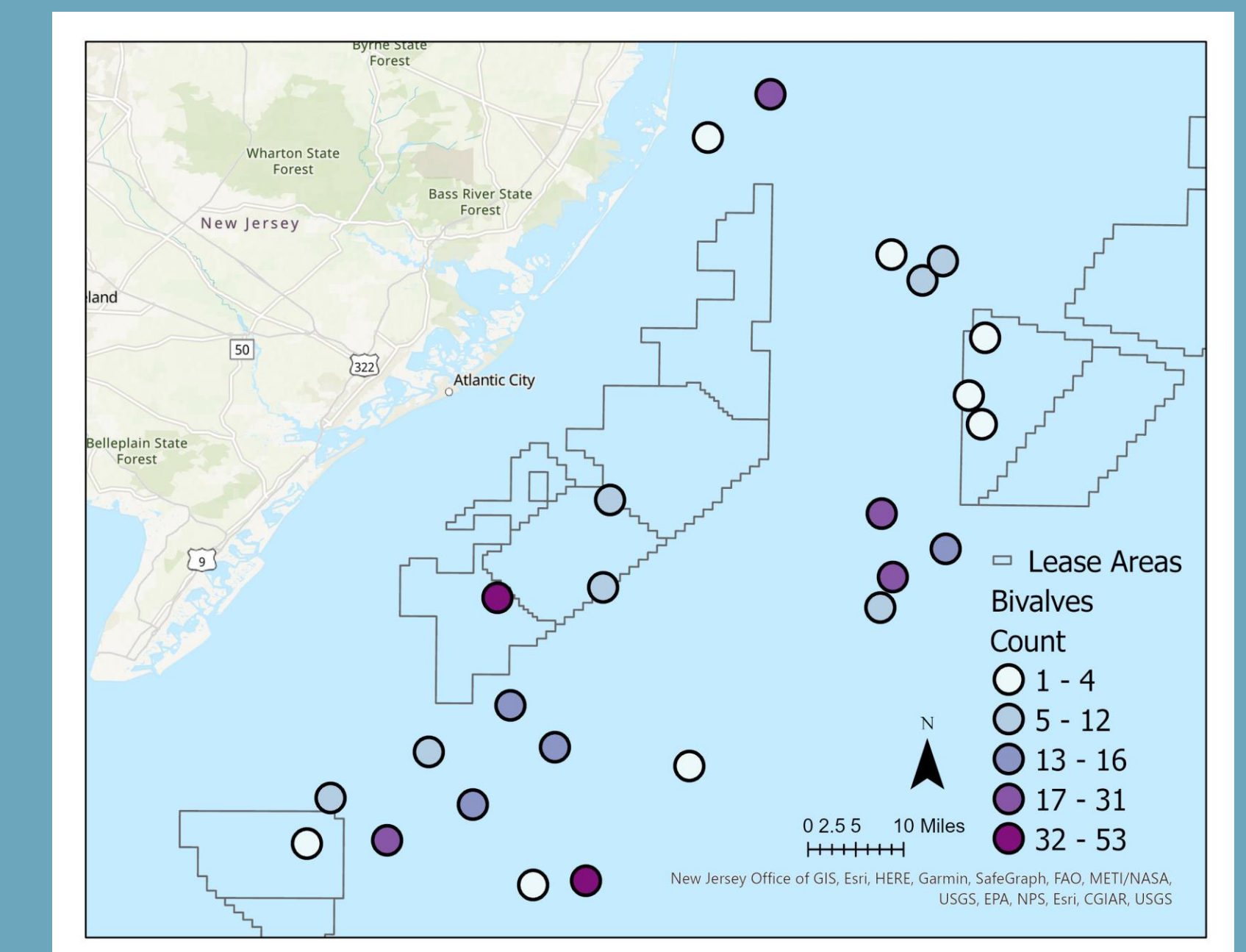*Figure 1.* Number of bivalves caught at each station.

Figure 2. Number of surf clams (*Spisula solidissima*) caught at each station