



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Pacific OCS Region

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Camarillo, CA 93010-6064

Agenda Item H.3  
Attachment 3  
September 2023

**August 14, 2023**

Mr. Marc Gorelnik, Pacific Council Chair  
Mr. Merrick Burden, Council Executive Director  
Pacific Fishery Management Council  
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101  
Portland, Oregon 97220

Dear Mr. Gorelnik and Mr. Burden:

Thank you for the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) letters dated April 6, 2023, April 12, 2023, and May 11, 2023. We appreciate the Marine Planning Committee and the PFMC's feedback regarding the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) offshore renewable energy leasing and planning process. The Administration and BOEM share the belief that renewable energy sources are needed to combat global climate change by reducing our dependence on fossil fuels. We agree that while offshore wind development provides renewable energy, it must be done responsibly and in collaboration with Tribes and local communities, including fishing stakeholders. We have reviewed your recommendations and will continue to consider the PFMC's input as we move forward with the leasing and planning process in the Pacific Region. This commitment to thoughtful and meaningful engagement is reflected in our responses to your recent letters below.

## **Draft Wind Energy Area Development**

BOEM's offshore wind energy process is carried out over the course of several years and comprises four distinct phases: (1) planning and analysis, (2) leasing, (3) site assessment, and (4) construction and operations, with public and stakeholder engagements and consultation with Tribal Nations throughout the entire process. BOEM is currently in the planning and analysis stage to identify areas suitable for leasing offshore Oregon.

Since 2011, BOEM has promoted coordination of renewable energy activities offshore Oregon with its Tribal, Federal, State, and local partners through the BOEM Oregon Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force (Task Force). Members of the public are also invited to attend Task Force meetings.

Informed by outreach and engagement pursuant to a plan developed with the State of Oregon and discussed at Task Force meetings beginning in 2019, BOEM published a Call for Information and Nominations (Call) on April 29, 2022, to invite public comment on and assess interest in possible commercial wind energy leasing on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) offshore the Oregon coast.

The Call is an early engagement step to solicit feedback at a regional scale to identify potential areas for offshore wind development. The goal is to identify areas that minimize potential impacts to ocean users and the marine environment and have the greatest potential for commercial viability.

BOEM's offshore wind planning process is collaborative and solicits information from Tribal Nations, ocean users, government agencies, the public, and other stakeholders throughout the process. Recognizing this, and in response to public requests to improve transparency and allow additional input, BOEM recently added a new step to the process to show more clearly how we took the data and comments received into consideration. This new step is issuing Draft Wind Energy Area(s) (WEAs) for public comment and is the next step in the planning process for Oregon. BOEM collaborated with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) to incorporate spatial modeling that analyzes the spatial data to identify the areas that are most compatible with potential wind energy leasing offshore Oregon.

NOAA Fisheries and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife collaborated to develop a combined fisheries data layer for select commercial and recreational fisheries, for use by BOEM and NCCOS, in the relative suitability model. Collaboration with NOAA Fisheries allowed us to include the best available information in the analysis. The draft BOEM NCCOS Oregon Draft Wind Energy Areas Report with the relative suitability maps will be provided on the BOEM website with the Draft WEA(s) for public comment. BOEM welcomes comments on how to improve the data used in the model to improve temporal variability.

Publication of the Draft WEA(s) will include a 60-day comment period to provide an additional opportunity for feedback before Final WEA(s) are identified. If BOEM decides to finalize the WEA(s), we will conduct an environmental analysis pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and associated consultations, for potential lease issuance. The environmental review will utilize the best available science and data, including traditional knowledge, and incorporate comments and feedback received from Tribal Nations, agency partners, the fishing industry, ocean users, and other stakeholders.

### **Meaningful Engagement with Tribal Nations, Local Communities, and the Fishing Community**

Even though Oregon is early in the renewable energy leasing process, BOEM has participated in or held over 130 meetings between October 2020 and May 2023 with Tribes, stakeholders, and partners to discuss offshore wind planning in Oregon. BOEM has listened and incorporated feedback into its initial planning decisions. This feedback loop of engagement and listening to Tribes, stakeholders, and local communities remains a fundamental part of this process.

BOEM consults with ocean users to select the best available science and modeling approaches and will continue to use the latest scientific data to identify areas on the U.S. OCS with the fewest environmental impacts and least conflicts, while still being technically and economically feasible for potential wind projects.

BOEM recognizes the unique legal relationship of the United States with Tribal governments as set forth in the Constitution of the United States, treaties, statutes, Executive Orders, and court decisions. BOEM implements Tribal consultation policies through both formal government-to-government consultation and informal dialogue, collaboration, and engagement. BOEM is committed to maintaining open and transparent communications with Tribal governments and considering their concerns on offshore wind planning.

## **Acting on Engagement – Fisheries Mitigation and Visual Impacts**

BOEM has been actively listening to the concerns raised about the offshore wind leasing process and has incorporated enhancements to our process such as the publication of Draft WEA(s) and associated reports to show how we took data and comments into consideration. We have also added dedicated staff to liaise with the fishing industry and Tribal Nations to ensure continuity of engagement on the West Coast.

BOEM is currently drafting national fisheries mitigation guidance, which will be a living document. The draft guidance provides recommended processes and methodologies for the offshore wind industry and lessees to design potential mitigation measures. The draft guidance is a national level approach, but BOEM and lessees also consider potential impacts and mitigation measures on project-specific Construction and Operations Plans (COPs). Additionally, at BOEM's request, the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine established a standing committee on offshore wind energy and fisheries. The committee serves as an independent, credible forum to discuss the state of science and pressing concerns related to the intersection of offshore wind with fisheries.

It is important to note that even before mitigation is considered, BOEM's process starts with avoidance in identifying suitable areas for wind energy leasing consideration, then minimization of potential impacts through lease stipulations and protective measures identified and imposed during project-specific analysis.

BOEM prioritizes continued dialogue throughout the development process. In recently executed offshore wind energy leases in California, BOEM included stipulations intended to ensure continued coordination with Tribes, the fishing industry, and Federal, State, and local agencies through mandated communication plans and regular progress reporting requirements. The Fisheries Communications Plan and Native American Tribes Communications Plan describe the strategies that the lessee intends to use for communicating with commercial fishing communities and Tribal communities, respectively, prior to and during activities in support of the submission of a plan. Additionally, BOEM included new bidding credits in the California leases, which incentivize lessees to enter into Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) with one or more Tribal Nations, communities, or stakeholder groups affected by activities on the lease. BOEM expects that these lease stipulations and bidding credits could be considered for future auctions on the West Coast.

In response to concerns BOEM heard from Tribes and coastal communities, BOEM also recently completed visual simulations of hypothetical offshore wind projects from key observation points in the vicinity of the Oregon Call Areas to inform the public of potential impacts to coastal viewsheds. BOEM plans to publish these visual simulations at the time the Draft WEA(s) are released for public comment.

### **1,300 Meters Water Depth**

BOEM is considering offshore wind leasing in Oregon in water depths up to 1,300 meters, which is roughly on the continental slope offshore Oregon, beyond which water depths increase quickly. This approach is consistent with the planning area established with input from the State and the BOEM Oregon Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force at the beginning of the offshore wind planning process in Oregon in 2019. Water depths up to 1,300 meters are a reasonable limit for near-term development of floating offshore wind energy facilities, based on West Coast offshore wind cost

modeling studies conducted by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory. As water depths increase, project costs and complexity increase because of increasingly longer mooring lines, potentially longer array cables, and more difficult logistics in anchor installation. While future planning could include deeper waters, initial floating offshore wind projects must remain competitive with other renewable energy resources for commercial viability while considering other conflicting uses.

## **Environmental Reviews and Studies**

BOEM has several ongoing and planned efforts that will assist in identifying and addressing the broad-scale, region-wide impacts noted by the Council. BOEM uses its environmental studies program to continuously identify information needs and procure scientific studies in response to those needs. For example, BOEM and NOAA Fisheries are currently collaborating on a study entitled *Socioeconomic Characterization of West Coast Fisheries in Relation to Offshore Wind Development*.

Additionally, BOEM has committed to preparing a programmatic environmental impact statement for the five existing California leases, to assist in a broad-scale analysis of offshore wind development and identification of potential avoidance, minimization, mitigation, and monitoring practices. Once BOEM receives a COP, BOEM will complete site-specific NEPA analyses of the project proposed in the COP. BOEM will use the best and most current information available, including analysis of cumulative impacts, in its decision-making process.

Throughout BOEM's offshore wind energy process, BOEM will continue to collaborate with ocean users to select the best available science, data, and modeling approaches, and traditional knowledge to identify areas on the U.S. OCS that are most appropriate for potential wind energy projects, while minimizing environmental impacts and user conflicts.

We look forward to continuing to engage with the Pacific Fishery Management Council. If you have any additional questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at [douglas.boren@boem.gov](mailto:douglas.boren@boem.gov) or (805) 384-6384, or Ingrid Biedron at [ingrid.biedron@boem.gov](mailto:ingrid.biedron@boem.gov).

Sincerely,

**DOUGLAS  
BOREN**

Douglas P. Boren  
Regional Director  
Pacific Regional Office

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Cc: Governor Tina Kotek