



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT
WASHINGTON, DC 20240-0001

July 10, 2023

The Honorable Tina Kotek
Governor of Oregon
Salem, Oregon 97301-4047

Dear Governor Kotek:

Thank you for your letter dated June 9, 2023, and our follow-up discussions with you on June 16, 2023, and with your staff on June 22, 2023, regarding renewable energy development offshore Oregon. The administration and I share your belief that offshore wind is necessary to combat climate change and improve our nation's energy security while creating high-quality jobs. We also agree that any offshore wind development must be done responsibly and in collaboration with Tribes and local communities, including fishing stakeholders. As we discussed in our recent conversation with your staff, we remain committed to working with the State on our shared priority of continued engagement with Tribal governments. We also share the State's commitment to listen to coastal communities to identify, understand, and respond to local concerns. This commitment to thoughtful and meaningful engagement is reflected in the updates below. I look forward to working with you and the Oregon Congressional delegation to make our shared vision a reality.

Early in the Renewable Energy Leasing Process

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM) 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 also have the greatest potential for commercial viability.

Offshore wind planning must be carried out in a collaborative manner. Recognizing this, and in response to public requests to improve transparency and allow additional input from Tribal Nations, stakeholders, and the public, BOEM recently added a new step to the process. This new step is issuing draft wind energy areas (WEAs) for public comment and is the next step in the planning process for Oregon. After months of collaboration and joint data analysis with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS), current analysis shows possible draft WEAs are likely to be significantly smaller, roughly 20 percent of the Coos Bay and Brookings Call Areas, reflecting input from Tribes and the fishing industry and incorporating data from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), the Department of Defense and the U.S. Coast Guard. The new process of publishing draft WEAs includes a 30-day comment period to provide an additional opportunity for Tribes, stakeholders, and partners to provide feedback to BOEM before final WEAs are identified. The final WEAs, which will be reviewed under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for potential lease issuance, will be based on the best available science and data, including traditional knowledge, as well as comments and feedback received from Tribal Nations, agency partners, the fishing industry, ocean users, and other stakeholders.

Meaningful Engagement with Tribes, Local Communities, and the Fishing Community

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.

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.

The addition of the NCCOS spatial model process analyzes the spatial data to identify the best areas for wind energy sites to help inform BOEM's draft WEAs for Oregon, which BOEM plans to have available for public review and comment prior to final WEA designations.

NOAA NMFS and ODFW developed fishing datasets and suitability rankings for use in the suitability model process. In the suitability model, BOEM chose to include a conservative dataset with very low suitability for offshore wind to reflect the comments and concerns from the fishing industry, and the importance of maintaining access to existing fishing grounds.

At a national level, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine established a new standing committee on offshore wind energy and fisheries. The committee will serve as an independent, credible forum to discuss the state of science and pressing concerns related to the intersection of offshore wind with fisheries.

Creating Positive Feedback Loops – Acting on Engagement

BOEM is actively listening to the concerns raised about the offshore wind leasing process and has incorporated enhancements to our process. In addition to the planned publication of draft WEAs, BOEM will be able to show how we took data and comments into consideration and dedicated staff to liaise with the fishing industry and Tribal Nations to ensure continuity of engagement on the West Coast. In response to concerns BOEM heard from Oregon Tribes and coastal communities, BOEM recently completed visual simulations of hypothetical offshore wind projects in the draft WEAs to inform the public of potential impacts to coastal viewsheds.

Recently issued leases in California include stipulations intended to ensure continued coordination with Tribes, the fishing industry, and other stakeholders through mandated communication plans and regular reporting requirements about engagement activities by lessees. Additionally, in the recent California offshore wind energy auction, BOEM included new bidding credits that incentivized lessees to enter into Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) with one or more communities, stakeholder groups, or Tribal entities affected by activities on the lease. BOEM will consider and solicit input on similar types of lease stipulations and bidding credits in potential future auctions on the West Coast.

Currently, BOEM is reviewing comments and consulting with Tribal Nations on the draft national fisheries mitigation guidance to mitigate offshore wind project impacts on fisheries and the fishing industry. BOEM expects to publish the final guidance later this year.

1,300 Meters Water Depth

BOEM is considering offshore wind leasing in water depths up to 1,300 meters, which is roughly on the continental slope offshore Oregon, beyond which water depths increase quickly. BOEM and the State of Oregon have conducted outreach and data gathering focused on areas with water depths up to 1,300 meters consistent with the planning area established with input from the State and Task Force at the beginning of the offshore wind planning in Oregon in 2019.

Water depths up to 1,300 meters is a reasonable limit for near-term development of floating offshore wind energy facilities, based on West Coast offshore wind cost modeling studies by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory. As water depths increase, project costs increase incrementally 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.

We look forward to continuing to work together as partners in the planning and analysis phase of the offshore wind leasing process in Oregon. Over the course of the next weeks, we welcome the opportunity to assess all of the work that has been completed to date and chart potential paths forward with the State, in collaboration with Tribal nations, local communities, and ocean stakeholders.

If you have any additional questions or comments, please contact Jeronimo Naranjo, BOEM Congressional Specialist, at (202) 880-3633 or Jeronimo.Naranjo@boem.gov. A similar response is being sent to each cosigner of your letter.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Klein
Director