

MARINE PLANNING COMMITTEE INFORMATIONAL REPORT ON OFFSHORE WIND ENERGY ISSUES

The Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) Marine Planning Committee (MPC) met on February 20, 2024, to discuss current offshore wind (OSW) energy issues and prepare an update for the April Council meeting. Because Marine Planning is not on the April 2024 agenda, the update is included as an Informational Report. The MPC produced MPC [Report 1](#) and Supplemental [Report 2](#) in the March 2024 Briefing Book, with additional information.

California Update

As noted in our Supplemental Report for the March meeting, the California Energy Commission (CEC) has scheduled a [March 20 Workshop](#) on the Draft AB 525 Strategic Plan for Offshore Wind off the Coast of California in Federal Waters. The CEC will be hosting a second workshop on March 29. Information on that Workshop should be posted to the [CEC's Event Page](#) soon. In addition, the comment deadline has been extended to April 22nd. A Draft of the Council's comment letter on the Draft AB 525 Strategic Plan will be distributed to the Council after the completion of your April meeting.

During the MPC's February meeting, three of the California lessees provided overviews of their planned survey activities. Presentations were provided by [Canopy Wind \(RWE\)](#), [Atlas Wind \(Equinor\)](#), and [Golden State Wind](#). The slides for each presentation are linked above. The presentations can also be viewed on the [recording](#) of the February 20 Marine Planning Committee meeting beginning at the 2 hour and 36-minute mark. The other two lessees were invited to participate but opted against doing so as they do not intend to start site surveys in the near future.

Oregon Updates

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) released its final Wind Energy Areas (WEAs) a week before the February 20 MPC meeting. The announcement was accompanied by an [Area Identification Memorandum](#) that provided BOEM's considerations and rationale in determining the final WEA delineations. At the same time, BOEM published a [notice of intent](#) (NOI) to prepare an environmental assessment for site assessment and characterization activities for the two WEAs. In response to the NOI, the Council approved a March 15, 2024, comment [letter](#) to BOEM.

BOEM representatives were present online at the March Council meeting and indicated that the next steps in the Oregon leasing phase will include the release of a draft EA and proposed sale notice (PSN) for public review, followed by a lease auction that could occur as soon as October 2024. The Council may wish to comment on the draft EA and/or PSN. See information below under Upcoming Events and Comment Opportunities.

The MPC also received an overview of Oregon [House Bill 4080](#), which was introduced in the short legislative session and passed in early March. Amendments made during the session included specific references to Oregon tribes and a change to allow the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) to do the outreach and lead an effort to develop and offshore wind Roadmap with Exit Ramps, even though that wording is not specifically in the bill. The bill also included funding to add positions to the Oregon DLCD to assist with the effort, especially

regarding Federal consistency reviews. The bill also sets strict labor standards that should be met for offshore wind construction projects. As of the briefing book deadline, Governor Kotek had not signed it but was expected to.

Lastly, the MPC understands the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission recently listed the [Southern Resident Killer Whales](#) as endangered under the Oregon Endangered Species Act. The group briefly discussed what that could mean as it relates to siting offshore wind but did not talk about it at great length.

Washington Update

The Washington State Department of Commerce selected Gridworks as the contractor to develop a report recommending an engagement plan for Tribes and stakeholders, and a planning process for offshore wind projects. The draft report is expected to be issued in spring 2024 for public comment, and the Council may wish to comment.

Tribal update

Tribal representative to the MPC, Steve Joner, reported on the Makah Tribe's progress working with NOAA Fisheries on the Tribe's request for assistance dealing with the complex scientific and ocean issues relating to offshore wind energy development. Virtual meetings have included subjects such as potential impacts to tribal fisheries, tribal fisheries that have life stages in California and groundfish surveys.

Mr. Joner said he is also trying to reach out to other tribes as part of his appointment to the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine's (NASEM's) [Standing Committee](#) on Offshore Wind and Fisheries and has already talked to one Oregon tribe and plans to visit Oregon in April to meet with tribes directly to learn more about other tribes' concerns related to offshore wind, particularly in southern Oregon and northern California.

Representatives from Gridworks, leading the Washington effort to learn more about a state outreach effort on offshore wind, met with some tribal members in February, but more conversations were planned for March.

Lastly, Mr. Joner reported that a startup company ([Panthalassa](#), Inc.) from Portland, Oregon, had deployed a buoy in Puget Sound that was generating a lot of discussion. Several [news reports](#) about the large, round, white portion of the buoy visible on the surface identified it as a renewable energy prototype buoy.

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Update

NMFS provided information about ecosystem indicators and ecosystem monitoring for OSW energy development. The MPC received a presentation from Kelly Andrews of the NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center, about the six broad-scale ecosystem indicators included in NOAA's 2023-2024 California Current Ecosystem Status Report (see pages 31-32, and Appendix Q) that NMFS is considering for use in tracking potential ecosystem impacts across all stages of OSW energy development. Mr. Joner suggested that salmon could be added as an indicator because of the importance to many West Coast tribes.

Dr. George Waters, Director of NMFS SWFSC's new Ecosystem Science Division, informed the MPC that his team is planning a long-term monitoring program to assess the effects of OSW energy on the pelagic upwelling ecosystem. They aim to have their first plan available this summer and expect that plans and operations will evolve over time. Their intent is to:

- link their new monitoring efforts to time series that already exist (e.g., CalCOFI) to broaden the temporal scope of baseline data they use to assess change;
- capitalize on expected contrasts (e.g., upwind vs. downwind and onshore vs. offshore) in order to have more power to observe effects; and
- focus on a) oceanography and plankton because change may be observable fastest in these cases, and b) protected species and fish because of their importance to stakeholders and their distributions might change as a result of OSW energy.

The SWFSC will use buoyancy gliders as a primary sampling tool, which are likely feasible to deploy through wind leases even after turbines are installed.

Upcoming Events and Other Information

March 20, 2024: [Workshop](#) on the Draft AB 525 Strategic Plan for Offshore Wind off the Coast of California in Federal Waters.

March 29, 2024: Second CEC workshop on Draft AB 525 Strategic Plan (see [CEC's Event Page](#))

Spring 2024:

- California Assembly Bill 525 Draft Strategic Plan; comment period ends 4/22/2024 (QR letter requested by the Council in March)
- Gridworks draft engagement and planning process draft report issued for public comment.
- BOEM Proposed Sale Notice for Oregon OSW Lease Areas for public comment.
- BOEM EA on site assessment and characterization activities for public comment.

May 13 – 15, 2024: Pacific Offshore Wind [Summit](#), Sacramento, CA

Summer/Fall 2024:

- BOEM Final Sale Notice for Oregon OSW Lease Areas.

Fall/Winter 2024:

- BOEM Lease Auction for Oregon OSW Leases.

PFMC
03/20/24