

BOEM completes environmental review of offshore wind leasing in Northern California

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As part of the Biden-Harris administration’s goal of deploying 30 gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind by 2030, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) today announced it has completed its environmental review of potential impacts from offshore wind energy leasing activities in the Humboldt Wind Energy Area (WEA), located 20 miles offshore northern California, and based on its analysis has issued a finding of no significant impact (FONSI).

“The completion of this Environmental Assessment represents an important step forward for ensuring that any future renewable energy development – should a lease sale occur -- is done in a responsible manner,” said BOEM Director Amanda Lefton. “Working closely with Tribes, state and federal partners and key stakeholders, BOEM remains focused on ensuring that such development is done in a way that avoids or reduces potential impacts to the environment and other ocean users in the region.”

BOEM's Environmental Assessment (EA) considers potential impacts from the issuance of leases within the WEA that comprises nearly 132,369 acres (206.8 square miles) off the coast of Humboldt County, California. The Humboldt WEA, if developed, could bring up to 1.6 GW of clean energy to the grid, enough to power approximately 560,000 homes.

The EA considers potential environmental consequences of site characterization activities (i.e., biological, archeological, geological, and geophysical surveys and core samples) and site assessment activities (i.e., installation of meteorological buoys). The EA also considers project easements associated with each potential lease and related right-of-way grants for subsea cable corridors in the Humboldt WEA.

Should a lease sale occur and before approving the construction of any offshore wind energy facility in the Humboldt WEA, BOEM will develop an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act to analyze the project-specific environmental and socioeconomic consequences, in consultation with Tribes and appropriate federal, state, and local agencies, and with participation by stakeholders and the public.

The EA, FONSI, and detailed information about the proposed leasing in the Humboldt WEA is available on BOEM's website at www.boem.gov/California.

Background

BOEM initially announced its intent to prepare an EA for the Humboldt WEA on July 28, 2021. BOEM sought public input on the issues and alternatives to be considered in the EA.

BOEM published the draft EA on January 11, 2022. In conjunction with its release, BOEM held two public virtual meetings with stakeholders to obtain their input. The release of the draft EA initiated a 30-day public comment period on the analysis document that closed on February 10, 2022.

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The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is responsible for America's offshore energy and mineral resources. The bureau promotes energy independence, environmental protection and economic development through responsible, science-based management of energy and mineral resources on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf.