

Oregon Coastal Caucus still concerned about offshore wind

January 31, 2024



Lawmakers representing Oregon’s coastal communities reiterated their concerns about offshore wind development to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management in a strongly worded letter last week.

Organized as the Oregon Coastal Caucus, the January 19 letter urging BOEM to prioritize the concerns of coastal community members and current ocean users was signed by seven Oregon legislators. They are Rep. David Gomberg, Sen. Dick Anderson, Sen. David Brock Smith, Sen. Suzanne Weber, Rep. Boomer Wright, Rep. Cyrus Javadi, and Rep. Court Boice.

“We cannot move forward with offshore wind in Oregon until the needs and concerns of these groups have been addressed,” the letter stated, noting opposition from the fishing industry, marine scientists, engineers, environmentalists, tribal governments, and coastal municipalities.

This isn’t the first time the Coastal Caucus has gone on the record with their dissatisfaction with the federal agency’s process. In May of 2022, the legislators pointed out widespread concerns and urged BOEM, among other things, to slow down the process in order to better hear and respond to concerns, locate wind turbines in deeper water, and engage in a full review of potential impacts on marine habitat, marine birds and mammals, and environmental impacts. In 2023, the group voiced its support for Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek’s

call for a “pause” on the offshore wind process, which was co-signed by U.S. Senators Wyden and Merkley, as well as U.S. Representatives Hoyle and Bonamici.

Caucus members were not satisfied that BOEM was listening and responding to concerns. In its most recent letter, the group pointed out that, in 2023, opportunities for in-person public comment “were limited to the south coast, ignoring the central coast where a significant proportion of the commercial fishing community is based.”

Lawmakers pointed out that the seafood industry supports more than 7,000 full-time jobs. They shared the concerns expressed by many since offshore wind discussions began that “a new use of the ocean should not come at the cost of existing uses and resources that provide benefits to food security and the economies of Oregon coastal communities.”

Heather Mann, executive director of Midwater Trawlers Cooperative, expressed her appreciation for the unwavering commitment of the Oregon Coastal Caucus to represent the concerns of constituents.

“We want to remind BOEM at every stage of this lengthy and worrying process that Oregonians will not be simply ignored or run over by outside interests. Our concerns have not been addressed and we are grateful for the Oregon Coastal Caucus and this reminder to BOEM that we aren’t backing down,” she said.

To read the full letter from the Oregon Coastal Caucus, visit the “news” page of midwatertrawlers.org.