

Oregon's Governor urged to use 'Oregon way' in ocean wind energy development

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Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek is being urged to embrace the “Oregon way” in pursuit of offshore wind energy development.

Oregon’s state seafood commodity commissions have expressed their concerns in a letter to Kotek over federal offshore wind energy development plans proposed for the southern Oregon coast.

The letter emphasizes what the commission states are adverse effects on the ocean environment and Oregon’s sustainable seafood industry.

Oregon Trawl, Oregon Dungeness Crab, Oregon Albacore and Oregon Salmon Commissions urged Kotek to prioritize Oregon’s own planning process under the auspices of the state official “Roadmap” initiative, intended to guide responsible offshore wind energy development in Oregon.

The alternative would be to follow the rushed federal process, which does not allow the impacted communities an authentic seat at the table, and it does not prioritize the viability of the seafood industry or the health of the ocean, according to a statement released jointly by the seafood commodity commissions.

“Being situated in the middle of one of the world’s four most productive marine regions, Oregon is blessed with its healthy abundant fisheries, which are known to be among the top well-managed fisheries in existence today,” Oregon Trawl Commission Director Telena Nowak said. “It is critically important for Oregon to step up our efforts in ensuring Oregon’s impacted communities and the pristine natural environments are respected and protected in the pursuit of offshore wind energy development.”

Oregon is one of many states around the country where the Biden Administration is looking to deploy industrial offshore wind energy projects in the global fight against climate change.

The newly proposed federally designated Wind Energy Areas (WEAs) have been established off the coast of Coos Bay and Brookings. The Coos Bay WEA is 32 miles offshore and amounts to 95 square miles of potentially leasable land for turbine construction. The Brookings WEA is larger, at 209 square miles, yet closer to shore, at only 18 miles from the beach.

The Oregon groups opposing the development said the offshore wind facilities will be built in the pristine ocean ecosystems that support remarkable marine biodiversity, including many protected species. No environmental studies have been performed to assess the risks of large-scale offshore wind energy production which risks overwhelming this unique remote ocean region, according to the opponents.

“We will continue to educate the Oregonians on what we believe is good for a sustainable ocean, so we can all enjoy its bounty for years to come,” Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission Executive Director Crystal Adams said.