

Interior Department proposes offshore wind sales in Oregon, Gulf of Maine

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The Department of the Interior last week announced two proposals for offshore wind energy auctions off the coast of Oregon and in the Gulf of Maine. The two sales proposed by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) have the potential to generate more than 18 gigawatts of offshore wind energy, enough to power more than six million homes.

The announcement is part of the Administration's commitment to expand offshore wind opportunities, building on investments made by the President's Investing in America agenda to develop a clean energy economy, create good-paying jobs for American workers, and make our communities more resilient.

"Since the start of the Biden-Harris administration, the Department of the Interior has approved the nation's first eight commercial-scale offshore wind energy projects. Today's announcement represents another stride in our commitment to building a greener energy future while creating jobs and supporting families," said Secretary Deb Haaland. "We're taking decisive action to catalyze America's offshore wind industry and

leverage American innovation to provide reliable, affordable power to homes and businesses, all while addressing the climate crisis."

"As we move forward with offshore wind energy in Oregon and the Gulf of Maine, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management remains dedicated to close collaboration with our government partners and key stakeholders," said BOEM Director Elizabeth Klein. "We're excited to unveil these proposed sales and emphasize our commitment to exploring the potential for offshore wind development from coast to coast."

The proposed sales reflect a multi-year planning process that has included robust engagement with Tribes, local communities, federal and state agencies, ocean users, and stakeholders to balance the complex social, ecological, and economic factors. BOEM's strategic partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science has enhanced this process and incorporated the best available ocean resource information to inform wind energy areas. In identifying these areas, BOEM prioritized avoidance of offshore fishing grounds and identification of vessel transit routes, while retaining sufficient acreage to support the region's offshore wind energy goals. These efforts are designed to set an informed foundation to deconflict multiple ocean uses in areas of future offshore wind energy development.

BOEM will continue to work through its Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Forces, which include representatives from federal, state and local agencies and Tribal governments, to coordinate on potential lease sales and support ongoing stakeholder engagement processes on broader offshore wind considerations — for example, state-led development of strategic roadmaps on offshore wind, which can help inform the multi-year process for proposed projects.

Gulf of Maine Proposed Offshore Wind Sale

The first-ever offshore wind energy auction in the Gulf of Maine Wind Energy Area would include eight lease areas offshore Maine, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, totaling nearly one million acres, which have the potential to generate approximately 15 GW of clean, renewable energy and power more than five million homes.

BOEM is seeking feedback on various aspects of the proposed lease areas, including size, orientation and location of the eight lease areas and which areas, if any, should be prioritized for inclusion or exclusion from this lease sale.

BOEM is proposing to conduct simultaneous auctions for each of the eight lease areas using multiple-factor bidding. BOEM is seeking comment on providing bidding credits to bidders that commit to supporting workforce training programs or supply chain development, or a combination of both, as well as a credit for a fisheries compensatory mitigation fund. BOEM is also seeking comment on potential lease stipulations regarding vessel transit and baseline environmental monitoring. Like recent leases in other regions, BOEM is proposing lease stipulations to ensure that any future leaseholders consider and engage potentially affected stakeholders and communities, including Tribes, historically underserved communities, and the fishing industry, early and often throughout the offshore wind energy development process.

Additional information can be found on BOEM's Gulf of Maine webpage.

Oregon Proposed Offshore Wind Sale

The proposed lease sale in Oregon includes two lease areas totaling 194,995 acres — one in the Coos Bay Wind Energy Area and the other in the Brookings Wind Energy Area — which have the potential to power more than one million homes with clean renewable energy.

Along with the proposed lease sale, BOEM has released its draft environmental review of potential impacts associated with offshore wind energy leasing activities for public review and comment.

BOEM is seeking feedback on several proposed lease stipulations that would reaffirm its commitment to create good-paying union jobs and continue robust engagement with Tribal governments, the fishing industry, affected communities, and other ocean users. Potential stipulations for the proposed Oregon sale include providing bidding credits to bidders that commit to supporting workforce training programs for the floating offshore wind energy industry, developing a domestic supply chain for the floating offshore wind industry, or a combination of both. The proposal also includes providing bidding credits to bidders who commit to executing community benefit agreements with Tribes, local communities, ocean users, or stakeholder groups expected to be affected by potential impacts from activities resulting from lease development.

The draft environmental review and additional information regarding virtual public meetings and how to comment can be found on the BOEM's Oregon webpage.

Biden-Harris Administration's Progress to Catalyze the Offshore Wind Industry

In addition to approving eight commercial-scale, offshore wind energy projects with a combined capacity of more than 10 gigawatts of clean energy from offshore wind projects—enough to power nearly 4 million homes—the Department has held four offshore wind lease auctions, including sales in the New York – New Jersey region, offshore the Carolinas, and the first-ever sales offshore the Pacific and Gulf of Mexico coasts.

The Department has also taken steps to grow a sustainable offshore wind industry by encouraging the use of project labor agreements, strengthening workforce training, bolstering a domestic supply chain, and through enhanced engagement with Tribes, fisheries, underserved communities and ocean users.

On April 24, 2024, Secretary Haaland announced a new five-year offshore wind lease schedule, which includes up to 12 potential offshore wind energy lease sales through 2029. Future offshore wind energy lease sales from BOEM are anticipated in the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, Pacific, and the waters offshore of the U.S. territories in the next five years.

The Department also recently announced that BOEM and the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement have finalized updated regulations for renewable energy development on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf. The final rule increases certainty and reduces the costs associated with the deployment of

offshore wind projects by modernizing regulations, streamlining overly complex processes and removing unnecessary ones, clarifying ambiguous regulatory provisions, and enhancing compliance requirements.