

## Offshore Wind Energy: Council wants current plans rescinded

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The Pacific Fishery Management Council has joined a chorus of voices recommending the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) rescind the current Oregon call areas designated for floating offshore wind energy development.

The council is also recommending BOEM start the siting process over using a spatial mapping tool focused on identifying deconflicted areas suitable for wind energy development.

Instead of using this approach to consider appropriate areas along the entirety of the Oregon Coast, BOEM has been using the mapping tool only to analyze the call areas identified last year.

Members of the fishing industry, environmental groups, tribes, and several of the council's advisory bodies have provided testimony to the council supporting a more widespread use of the mapping tool. The motion also included sending the same letter to Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek.

"The Council's action sends a strong signal to BOEM that fisheries leaders do not want to risk losing our productive fisheries, the scientific surveys on which our fisheries management depends, or the health of our ocean ecosystems due to offshore wind," WCSPA Deputy Director and Co-Chair of the Council's Marine Planning Committee Susan Chambers said. "The California Current is one of the most productive ecosystems in the world. We need to get this right."

Seven council advisory bodies have provided detailed statements voicing concerns about the current process, with several bodies calling to rescind the current Oregon call areas. The advisory body statements were buoyed by oral public comment from 10 organizations and businesses, including the environmental organization, Oceana, as well as individual fishing businesses and fishing trade associations.

"We hear the climate crisis is so severe that collateral damage to birds, whales, the California current ecosystem, food security, even to fisheries, fishermen and rural community economies is an accepted part of the transition to cleaner energy," Midwater Trawlers Cooperative Executive Director Heather Mann and one of the leaders of the informal coalition Protect US Fishermen said in her testimony, "That is an unacceptable premise to me, and I hope it is to you as well."

During a recent meeting, the motion passed unanimously, 10-0, with four abstention votes cast by the state representatives for Oregon, Washington, and California as well as the NMFS representative.

Tribal representative and Council member Joe Oatman reiterated concerns that have been expressed frequently about the lack of proper government to government consultation with tribes.

"Tribal concerns are not being given the due consideration that they deserve," Oatman said. "Many potential impacts on the California current ecosystem and the aquatic resources on which they depend have not been adequately identified or addressed by BOEM. We are very concerned that the cumulative impact of wave energy areas in California, Oregon and Washington and their individual environmental assessments will be inadequate to protect treaty fishing rights."

Oregon Council Member Christa Svensson made the motion, explaining, "I've made this motion to rescind the current call areas in favor of a full Oregon coastline review utilizing the NCCOS spatial mapping tool."

She noted that rescinding the current areas and starting again would, "signal to key stakeholders that BOEM is sincere in their goal to identify areas of development that have the least conflict."

BOEM representative Lisa Gilbane noted on the record "I want to remind the Council that BOEM's charge is not to avoid fishing conflicts in Oregon."