Del Norte Triplicate

NEWS

Offshore wind energy sales moving forward

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The U.S. Department of the Interior has 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 Biden 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," Secretary Deb Haaland said. "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," BOEM Director Elizabeth Klein said. "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 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, according to a release from BOEM.

In identifying the 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, the release states.

BOEM will continue to work through its Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Forces, which includes 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.

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.

Reaction

Oregon State Sen. Dick Anderson calls the federal move “extremely disappointing.”

“This is extremely disappointing, and I stand with my tribal friends, the bipartisan coastal caucus members of the legislature and especially my neighbors who live on the coast when we urged caution until there is further understanding of the impacts of to the entire environment,” Anderson said. “Sadly, this is a normal course of action for the federal government, who just provides lip service to all of us versus actually listening to us. My office is engaged in doing whatever we can to slow the process down before there is no turning back.”

State Rep. David Gomberg told KOIN Portland that the Oregon Caucus cannot support future wind development steps off the Oregon coast by BOEM until Oregon develops its Offshore Wind Road Map.

“The federal government owes the people of the Oregon coast the due diligence required to ensure that these turbines won’t disrupt both our coastal economy and its ecology,” Gomberg told KOIN. “The Coastal Caucus stands in firm opposition to lease auctions at this time.”

The Confederated Tribes of Coos Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians said the acreage in the proposal is within the tribe’s ancestral territory and are important areas for tribal fishing.

“The tribe has consistently urged that BOEM delay moving forward with wind energy development until a better understanding is made of the impacts to fish, wildlife, the marine environment, and cultural resources important to the tribe,” Tribal Council Chair Brad Kneaper said in a release. “No one, including BOEM, has an understanding on how wind development will impact the fragile marine environment.”