

Offshore Wind Survey shows Oregonians are divided in wake of Executive Order

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In a survey conducted by electrical manufacturer Hubbell, opinions on offshore wind (OSW) were polled with 350 Western Oregonians, with an oversample of those living in coastal communities. Specifically, Clatsop, Tillamook, Lincoln, Coos and Curry County were given extra weight by Hubbell and their partner in the survey, EMC Research.

Despite some vocal pushback from locals in Coos and Curry County, BOEM's leasing of designated wind energy areas off the coast of Brookings and Coos Bay was slated for late fall, 2024. BOEM postponed that lease auction after what they called "insufficient bidder interest". Likely, the results of November's election gave companies pause in their hopes for development.

This suspicion proved valid when, during his blitz of executive orders to start the term, President Trump signed a temporary withdrawal of all offshore wind leasing. Even some leases which had already been

granted are now up for review for termination. This is after the Biden administration put emphasis on developing alternate energy sources, with OSW among other methods given support.

According to the Hubbell survey 72% of those surveyed on the coast were at least tangentially aware of ongoing news of OSW, with only 55% of those in greater Western Oregon otherwise aware. A majority of both communities were made aware through local news outlets.

Residents of coastal communities perceived the discussion of OSW development to be negative at a rate of 59%, showing that opposition has indeed been vocal, despite the fact that the survey shows that 70% of coastal participants support expanding renewable energy. 63% support expanding wind energy facilities specifically. Narrowing it down even more, 60% of coastal participants supported installing OSW turbines off the Oregon coast.

The major listed reasoning for opposition among coastal residents had to do with potential development impacting the environment (marine life and coastal habitats), at 49%. In second place in terms of reasons for opposition is distrust of intention and the corporate developers. 18% of coastal residents surveyed think “it’s all for profits and primarily benefits developers”. Only 3% of those polled saw issue with the impacts on coastal views.

The biggest sticking point however seeming to be in the immediate impact of OSW development versus the long-term impacts of climate change. 55% of those coastal folks surveyed thought that those immediate impacts outweighed the potential long-term benefits that reducing our reliance on energy sources like coal and fossil fuels will have on climate change.

While this survey is interesting and tells us a lot about what is on Western Oregonian’s minds in regard to OSW, Hubbell do have their own interests in the matter. They are sponsors of the Pacific Ocean Energy Trust’s Northwest Offshore Wind Conference, which took place this week in Portland. Their CEO and Co-Owner Zach Hyder presented this survey information to the conference’s attendees, all who represented businesses that are looking to get in the door of renewable energy in Oregon.

We here at the World are much more interested in what YOU think. If you have an opinion on OSW development here on the coast, please write in with your thoughts.

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