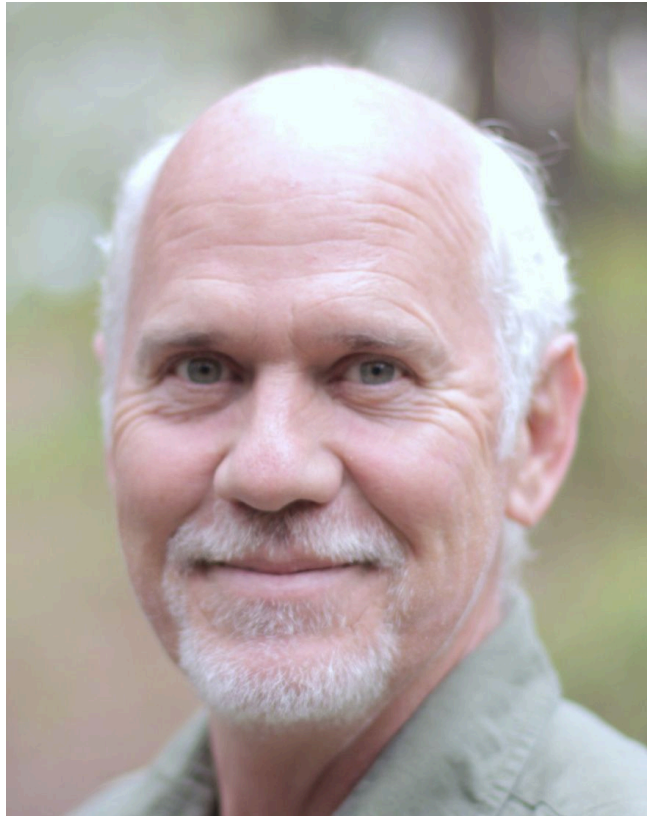


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## In My View: Offshore Wind Planning is Proceeding

February 23, 2024



Last week I wrote about the Yurok Tribe sponsored Tribal Offshore Wind Summit in Eureka and the wealth of information I gained from attending this event. The Yurok Tribe is setting a good example of engagement in a public process. They have not taken a position for or against offshore wind but are at the negotiating table.

Our local government leaders and citizens also need to pay attention now, even though a wind lease offshore Del Norte County may be years away. Local, state, and federal agencies are laying the foundation for all future offshore wind development in California. We can learn from the experiences of Humboldt and Morro Bay.

BOEM

There are currently no plans for a lease sale offshore of Del Norte County, but the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is initiating a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for both the Morro Bay and Humboldt lease areas. ([www.boem.gov/caoffshorepeis](http://www.boem.gov/caoffshorepeis)) A PEIS is the first general analysis of the impacts of offshore wind.

A Programmatic EIS is a requirement of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and is a multi-step process. The first step provides the affected community with an opportunity to suggest issues that should be evaluated in more detail. In this way the studies will address local concerns.

BOEM just completed a public comment period where they took suggestions on the scope of this study. Through this process they received input on issues and alternatives. I attended one of the public meetings and there were good suggestions based on local concerns. The most useful comments identified specific issues.

## PEIS

This scoping process is only the beginning of this effort to develop a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS). During the next step in the procedure, BOEM will prepare a draft PEIS in cooperation with other agencies. In August they will publish a notice of availability and again invite comments from the public.

BOEM will consider these public comments and discuss possible responses or changes to the draft PEIS. By the summer of 2025 they anticipate that the Final PEIS will be available for review. Shortly afterwards they will approve a record of decision. This document will provide policy guidance but does not approve any projects.

BOEM will conduct a project specific Environmental Impact Statement for every individual offshore wind project based on detailed construction and operations plans. These are all the steps that BOEM will go through here if there is an offshore wind lease sale off the coast of Del Norte County. We can watch and learn.

## AB 525

Assembly Bill 525 was enacted in 2021 and directs the California Energy Commission (CEC) to complete and submit a strategic plan for offshore wind development in federal waters off the California Coast. The CEC is circulating a draft strategic plan for public comment ([efiling.energy.ca.gov](http://efiling.energy.ca.gov)). Comments are due by March 22.

The AB525 Offshore Wind Strategic Plan will be the blueprint for all future offshore wind development in California. This plan will affect Del Norte County. Chapter 3 discusses potential economic and work force benefits. Chapter 4 addresses avoidance, minimization, and mitigation of potential impacts.

Chapter 5 identifies suitable sea space to accommodate the offshore wind planning goals and includes a large area 20 miles off the coast of Del Norte County. Chapter 6 analyzes port and waterfront infrastructure and identifies our harbor as a possible operations and maintenance harbor to support offshore operations.

Other chapters cover subjects including workforce development, permitting and transmission planning. If you are interested in learning more about what is happening with offshore wind in California, I encourage you to spend some time to read through the draft strategic plan. They are asking for your input before it is finalized.

### Closer To Home

A group of community partners is kicking off a “Del Norte Energy Resiliency Information Series” with a panel of experts on offshore wind. This event is on Saturday March 2 from 2-4 PM at the United Methodist Church at 664 H Street in downtown Crescent City. Admission is free and the public is welcome to attend.

Participants will learn about offshore wind technology, the lease process, the environmental review process, and the positive and negative impacts of offshore wind. There will be an update on projects happening in Humboldt and possible future job opportunities in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties and adjacent tribal lands.

The goal of this group is to inform citizens regarding the impacts of offshore wind development and how they can participate in planning and mitigation. There will be a special emphasis on how offshore wind will impact commercial fisheries.

Panelists include Lisa Gilbane, Environmental Analysis Section Chief, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management; Mike Rademaker, Crescent City Assistant Harbor Master; Alec Dompka, Economic Development Advisor, UC Davis Cooperative Extension; Wes White, Crescent City Harbor Commissioner and Tom Wheeler Executive Director, EPIC.

### Be Well Informed

There are reasons to be skeptical and wary of another big industry coming into our backyard. There are many unknowns about offshore wind, but there are many things that can be known now. If we all try to be well informed, we will have a more productive discussion of the potential, possibilities, pitfalls, and perils of wind.

It is not as helpful to simply oppose offshore wind for whatever reason. It will be more effective to raise specific legitimate concerns. These projects are 20 miles offshore. How will this affect fishing? They will not be visible from land. How will this impact on our tourism? There is still more to learn. We should stay engaged.

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