An Introduction to Public Participation in U.S. Offshore Wind Development

Offshore wind power is an exciting new frontier for American energy production, where technological advances, business opportunity, and policy are converging to unlock a reliable natural resource. Offshore wind will bring tens of thousands of highly-skilled U.S. jobs, strengthen coastal economies, and deliver vast amounts of reliable, clean energy to America’s largest population centers.

The Offshore Wind Sector’s Commitment to Public Engagement

The emerging U.S. offshore wind industry, the U.S. fishing industry, other ocean users, and coastal communities can benefit by working side-by-side, sharing expertise and providing feedback throughout the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management’s (”BOEM”) regulatory process. Public participation from other ocean users, including the fishing industry and coastal communities, is essential to help the United States achieve the full potential of offshore wind development to ensure an American offshore regulatory process for commercial offshore wind development.

This guide is meant to draw attention to the opportunities for public participation in BOEM’s regulatory process for offshore wind development in federal waters, with more in the works.

Interested parties, including members of the general public, public institutions, at levels of government, non-governmental organizations, and educational and research institutions, have numerous opportunities to provide feedback throughout the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management’s (”BOEM”) regulatory process. Public participation from other ocean users, including the fishing industry and coastal communities, is essential to help the United States fully realize the benefits of offshore wind power.

This guide is meant to draw attention to the opportunities for public comment in BOEM’s regulatory process for offshore wind development in federal waters, with more in the works.

More information about the offshore wind leasing process and public participation opportunities can be found in the following resources:


About the Special Initiative on Offshore Wind:

The Special Initiative on Offshore Wind is an independent project at the University of Delaware’s College of Earth, Ocean and Environment that supports the advancement of offshore wind as part of a comprehensive solution to the most pressing energy problems facing the United States. The Special Initiative on Offshore Wind provides expertise, analysis, information sharing, and strategic partnerships to industry, regulatory bodies, and government stakeholders to build understanding and drive the deployment of offshore wind.

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About the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA):

AWEA is the national trade association of the U.S. wind energy industry. We represent 1,000 member companies (85% of the U.S. capacity) serving a powerful voice for how wind works for America. Members include global leaders in wind power and energy development, turbine manufacturing, and component and service suppliers.

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How Are Offshore Wind Farms Sited?

Your Feedback Makes a Difference

What Happens if There Is an Unsolicited Lease Request?

Unsolicited lease requests are another way that BOEM works with interested parties to identify potential areas for offshore wind development in federal waters. An unsolicited lease request is a submission received by BOEM (i.e., not in response to a Request for Interest (“RFI”) or a Call issued by BOEM). The receipt of an unsolicited lease request does not constitute a competitive process. Rather, the receipt of an unsolicited lease request serves to inform BOEM of interest in leasing particular areas on the OCS.

Unsolicited lease requests provide an avenue for developers to seek a federal lease for a hybrid facility or the development of renewable energy projects. BOEM issues a Request for Competitive Interior Notice to advertise opportunities for renewable energy projects. Additional information is necessary, important, and/or a lease for renewable energy projects is considered for the RFI. Through the public participation process, in addition to environmental and technical reviews of the COP, BOEM decides whether or not to issue a Call on the COP for energy projects. This process is a competitive, rather than an unsolicited, leasing process that allows BOEM to consider multiple lease requests before awarding a lease.

For more information, please visit https://boem.gov/Renewable-Energy-State-Activities/ and https://boem.gov/Strengthening-the-Task-Forces/ or contact us at boem@boem.gov.