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Milestone Reached for Commercial Wind Energy Development Offshore North Carolina

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Public Comment Sought on Environmental Assessment for 300,000-Acre Wind Energy Areas

1/22/2015

Last edited 4/26/2016

WASHINGTON — As part of President Obama's [Climate Action Plan](#) to create American jobs, develop domestic clean energy resources and cut carbon pollution, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Director Abigail Hopper today announced the release of an Environmental Assessment (EA) supporting a potential lease sale for more than 300,000 acres of federal waters off the coast of North Carolina for wind energy development.

“No challenge poses a greater threat to future generations than climate change, and today's announcement marks yet another milestone in the President's strategy to develop renewable energy, create American jobs and strengthen the nation's energy security future,” said Secretary Jewell. “In close coordination with our partners in North Carolina, we are moving forward to determine what places make sense to harness the enormous wind energy potential off the Atlantic seaboard.”

Today's announcement builds on BOEM's work to jumpstart development of offshore wind through a collaborative state-federal process to identify Wind Energy Areas and hold competitive lease sales. To date, BOEM has awarded seven commercial wind energy leases off the Atlantic coast: two non-competitive leases (Cape Wind in Nantucket Sound off Massachusetts and an area off Delaware) and five competitive leases (two offshore Massachusetts-Rhode Island, two offshore Maryland and another offshore Virginia). Together, the competitive lease sales have generated more than \$14 million in high bids for over 357,000 acres in federal waters. BOEM is expected to hold two additional competitive lease sale auctions in 2015: the Massachusetts lease sale will occur on January 29, and the New Jersey lease sale will follow later this year.

The Wind Energy Areas identified by BOEM offshore North Carolina total about 307,590 acres and include the Kitty Hawk Wind Energy Area (about 122,405 acres), the Wilmington West Wind Energy Area (about 51,595 acres), and the Wilmington East Wind Energy Area (about 133,590 acres). A map of the three areas can be found by clicking [here](#).

“Our progress in standing up an offshore wind energy industry is the result of outstanding collaboration with state, tribal and local stakeholders, exemplified by the North Carolina Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force,” said Director Hopper. “We look forward to working with the state of North Carolina, industry and a broad range of stakeholders as this exciting process continues to further commercial wind development in the United States.”

Consistent with the Interior Department's “Smart from the Start” strategy for offshore wind, each of the Atlantic Wind Energy Areas are designed to make available areas that are attractive for commercial offshore wind development, while also protecting important viewsheds, sensitive habitats and resources and minimizing space use conflicts with activities such as military operations, shipping and fishing.

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, BOEM looked at potential impacts associated only with issuing leases and approving site assessment activities in these Wind Energy Areas. If, after leases are

issued, a lessee proposes to construct a commercial wind energy facility, it must submit a construction and operations plan for BOEM's review and approval. BOEM would then prepare a site-specific NEPA analysis for the project proposed.

The public is invited to view the EA and submit comments via BOEM's website during the 30-day comment period beginning January 23, 2015. BOEM will also hold three public meetings in North Carolina during February to provide an overview of the EA findings and offer additional opportunities for public comments.

To view the EA and submit comments, visit BOEM's website at: <http://www.boem.gov/About-BOEM/Public-Engagement/Public-Engagement-Opportunities.aspx>.

BOEM's three public meetings will be held at the following locations:

- Monday, February 9, 2015 in the Northern Outer Banks, NC
- Wednesday, February 11, 2015 in Wilmington, NC
- Thursday, February 12, 2015 in Carolina Shores or Sunset Beach, NC

Specific times and venues will be posted online at <http://www.boem.gov/State-Activities-North-Carolina/>.

In December 2012, BOEM published in the Federal Register a Call for Information and Nominations (Call) and a Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Assessment (NOI). BOEM considered all comments received in response to the Call and NOI and worked closely with Federal, State, and local government agencies and stakeholders to avoid existing high use and sensitive resource areas while identifying areas suitable for offshore wind development.

More information about this decision and BOEM's wind energy leasing efforts offshore North Carolina can be found on BOEM's website by clicking [here](#).

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