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MMS and Massachusetts Hold Offshore Renewable Energy Task Force Meeting

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today the Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) held its first task force meeting with state and local officials from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to discuss renewable energy development in federal waters off the southern coast of Massachusetts. The meeting took place at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy. The MMS is establishing inter-governmental task forces, with which it will consult regarding renewable energy leasing and development on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS).

The MMS worked with Massachusetts Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Ian Bowles to establish the Massachusetts task force, which is composed of affected federal and state agencies, state legislators, local elected officials, and tribal leaders. These representatives are working with MMS to provide input on implementation of the federal lease process for OCS renewable energy development.

"Numerous local, state and federal governmental agencies have statutory roles related to offshore renewable energy projects," said MMS Director Liz Birnbaum. "This task force will ensure that projects are efficiently and effectively reviewed to support both the Administration's goal of broadening the nation's energy mix, and Massachusetts's goal of meeting its Renewable Portfolio Standard by developing renewable energy resources off its coast."

"Responsible development of offshore renewable energy is essential for meeting our goals as a state and a nation," said Governor Deval Patrick. "The Commonwealth is pleased to be working with this new task force to ensure that we get it right as we move collectively toward a clean energy future."

"With our first-in-the nation Ocean Management Plan out for public comment, Massachusetts is fully engaged in exploring the sustainable development of offshore renewable energy," Secretary Bowles said. "We look forward to partnering with local communities and providing the MMS with advice and feedback as this important endeavor unfolds."

The first MMS Massachusetts task force meeting enabled the representatives to discuss their goals and objectives. MMS officials explained the renewable energy commercial leasing process and the environmental review process for proposed projects. The meeting also provided a forum to solicit feedback on the draft task force charter and the proposed next steps in the OCS commercial leasing process offshore Massachusetts. Additionally, members of the public attended the meeting and had an opportunity to ask questions of MMS officials.

In addition to representatives of federal and state agencies, task force members include members of Congress; Cape and Island state legislators; tribal leaders; selectmen from the towns of Westport, Dartmouth, Gosnold, Aquinnah, Chilmark, West Tisbury, Tisbury, Oaks Bluff, Edgartown, and Nantucket; elected commissioners from the Duke and Barnstable County; and elected officials from the Martha's Vineyard Commission and the Nantucket Planning Board.

Task force meetings were recently held in Delaware and Rhode Island; and task forces are also being formed for the states of New Jersey and Virginia. These task forces and other collaborators will assist the MMS in facilitating the commercial leasing process for renewable energy development on the OCS.

In April 2009, the MMS published the "[Final Framework for Renewable Energy Development on the OCS](#)" in the *Federal Register*. This Framework establishes the process for granting leases, easements, and rights-of-way for offshore renewable energy development.

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