

The NewsRoom

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MMS Takes Major Step Forward on Offshore Alternative Energy

Issues Notice to Determine Competitive Interest in Nominated Areas

WASHINGTON □ The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service today designated five areas on the [Outer Continental Shelf](#) as priority areas for alternative energy research in federal waters.

The five areas are offshore New Jersey, Delaware, Georgia, Florida and California. The agency is proposing limited, temporary leases in these areas for data collection and technology testing related to wind, wave and ocean current energy development. There will be no commercial energy production activity associated with the proposed leases.

"This is a major step forward in expanding our nation's energy portfolio," said [MMS Director Randall Luthi](#) during a speech today at the Global Marine Renewable Energy conference in New York. "The information gained from research in these areas will greatly increase our understanding of the vast renewable energy potential just off our coast," he said.

The agency received over forty nominations for alternative energy research projects in response to a [November 2007 Federal Register](#) notice. Of those, 16 could potentially go forward within the five priority areas. Ten of those proposed projects are related to wind energy and would be located in the areas offshore New Jersey, Delaware and Georgia. Four proposals offshore Florida would be related to ocean current energy, and two off Northern California would be related to wave energy. The remaining nominations are still being considered by MMS, and decisions will be based on the proposed projects' viability.

Prior to leases actually being issued or consideration of specific project proposals, the agency must first determine if competitive interest exists for research in the five areas. MMS must also evaluate other information related to those areas such as environmental factors and current commercial activities such as fishing and shipping.

The agency issued a [Federal Register](#) notice to be published Friday, April 18 that provides details about the five areas along with instructions for the public to provide comments. Individuals or organizations with competitive interest will have 30 days to provide comments, and the agency will accept public comments on the proposed lease areas for 60 days. The [Federal Register](#) notice will be published tomorrow.

The November notice also established interim guidelines for alternative energy research and testing on the OCS. MMS is preparing final regulations for the [OCS Alternative Energy and Alternate Use](#) program in accordance with the [Energy Policy Act of 2005](#) and hopes to publish those regulations by the end of the year.

"We are excited to be moving forward and hope to work with interested and affected parties to advance our knowledge of important offshore energy resources," stated Director Luthi.

Comments may be submitted by either of the following methods:

1. [Federal eRulemaking Portal](#): Under the tab "More Search Options," click Advanced Docket Search, then select "Minerals Management Service" from the agency drop-down menu, then click "submit." In the Docket ID column, select MMS-2008-OEMM-0020 to submit public comments and to view supporting and related materials available for this rulemaking.

2. Mailing your comments to the following address:

Minerals Management Service
Offshore Energy and Minerals Management
Alternative Energy and Alternate Use Team
381 Elden Street
Herndon, Virginia 20170-4817

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 authorized MMS to establish the OCS Alternative Energy and Alternate Use (AEAU) Program. Under this authority, MMS will regulate alternative energy projects and projects that involve the alternate use of existing oil and gas platforms on the OCS. Alternative energy includes, but is not limited to wind, wave, solar, underwater current and generation of hydrogen. Alternate uses of existing facilities may include aquaculture, research, education, recreation, or support for offshore operations and facilities.

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[MMS: Securing Ocean Energy & Economic Value for America](#)
[U.S. Department of the Interior](#)