

High-Level Summary of Scoping Period Comments

Environmental Assessment for Commercial Wind Leasing and Site Assessment Activities on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf Offshore Oregon

April 2024





Background

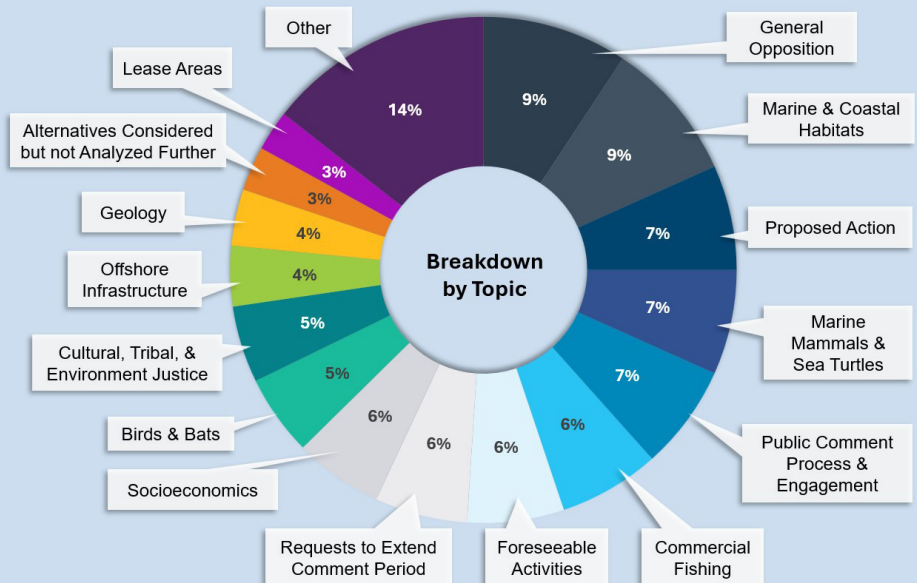
On Feb. 14, 2024, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) published in the Federal Register a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) for commercial wind leasing and site assessment activities on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) offshore Oregon [Docket No. BOEM-2023-0065]. The NOI initiated a 30-day public comment period. The comment period closed on Mar. 15, 2024.

The EA will consider the potential environmental impacts associated with possible wind energy-related leasing, site assessment, and site characterization activities on the U.S. OCS offshore Oregon. As part of the scoping process, BOEM invited public input on the scope of the EA, including environmental issues and the identification of reasonable alternatives that should be considered in the EA. BOEM will assess the environmental impacts of any proposed wind energy projects after a lease is issued and before deciding whether or not to approve any lessee’s construction and operations plan.

BOEM received 127 comments during the scoping period. Comments were received from federal agencies, state agencies, local agencies, Tribes, non-governmental organizations, and individuals.

The following are the most common topics:

-  Potential impacts on habitats and wildlife.
-  Potential impacts on commercial fishing and other industries.
-  Meaningful engagement with affected communities.
-  Coordination with other government agencies.



BOEM scoping period comments received by topic.



Potential impacts on habitats and wildlife

Many comments encouraged BOEM to assess the potential impacts on the marine habitats and wildlife caused by site assessment and characterization activities and the construction and operations of wind turbines and transmission cables. Federal and state agencies, Tribes, non-governmental organizations, and individuals raised concerns about potential harm to sensitive and/or critical seafloor habitats and migration corridors for various species of marine wildlife, especially those that are endangered and/or important to Tribal and commercial fishing activities.



Potential impacts on commercial fishing and other industries

Many comments, including those by non-governmental organizations and individuals, expressed concerns about the potential negative impacts of floating offshore wind (FOSW) farms on fishing and other ocean-based industries (e.g. shipping). These concerns centered on possible damage and/or disruption of important fish habitat and/or migration corridors, reduced access to fishing sites for fishing vessels, and overcrowding and stress on coastal fishing ports caused by developer vessels and equipment. Several commenters also urged BOEM to assess and mitigate impacts on shipping vessel routes.



Meaningful engagement with affected communities

Multiple commenters urged BOEM to engage with affected communities in genuine and transparent ways that acknowledge their concerns. Several comments among Tribes, local government, non-governmental organizations, and individuals requested an extension of 30 or more days to the EA scoping period to allow more time to prepare comments. Some comments were critical of BOEM's engagement efforts so far and supported more opportunities in the future for public input, including from coastal residents and Tribes.



Coordination with other government agencies

Many federal and state agency comments encouraged BOEM to consult with them and other relevant agencies during the EA process as needed and as the development of FOSW progresses and jurisdictional authorities begin to intersect. Some comments also reminded BOEM of their obligation to consult with relevant agencies.



Other comments

Several comments raised concerns about the cost-effectiveness of FOSW farms as a source of energy. Commenters also noted concerns about the viability of FOSW in waters as deep as those in the designated Wind Energy Areas off the Oregon coast. Several comments also requested BOEM to complete a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) before issuing leases to developers. Additionally, several comments expressed concern about impacts to coastal viewsheds. Some commenters also requested an extension for the EA scoping comment period.