

# High-Level Summary of Draft Environmental Assessment Comments

## Commercial Wind Lease Issuance on the Pacific Outer Continental Shelf, Offshore Oregon August 2024






### Background

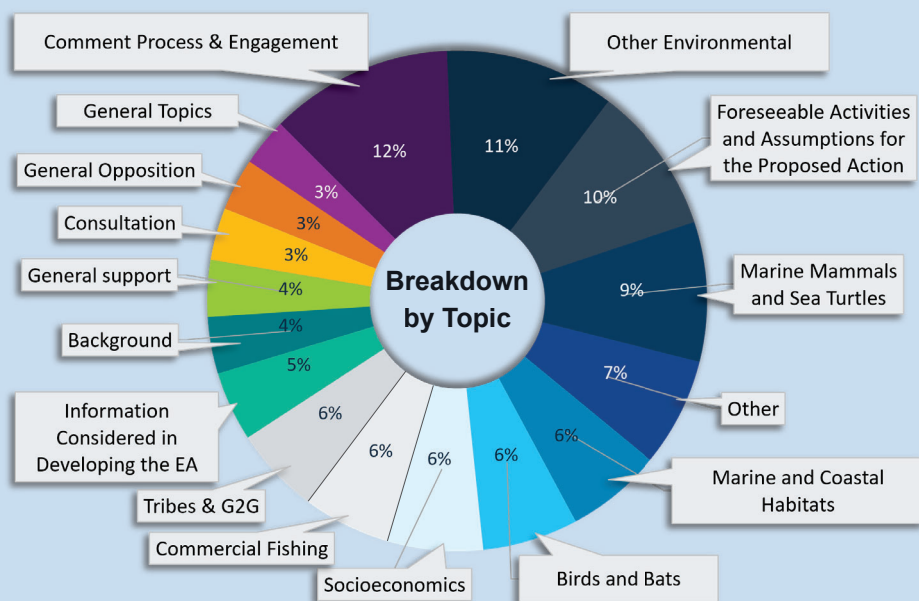
On May 1, 2024, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) published a notice of availability (NOA) of a draft environmental assessment (EA) to consider the potential environmental impacts associated with wind energy-related leasing and grant issuance, site assessment, and site characterization activities on the U.S. Pacific Outer Continental Shelf (OCS), offshore Oregon [Docket No. BOEM-2023-0065]. The NOA announced a 30-day public review and comment period as well as the dates and times for public meetings on the draft EA. In response to Tribal and stakeholder requests, BOEM announced a two-week extension of the comment period, which closed on June 14, 2024. More details on comments received on the draft EA and BOEM’s response to commenters is available in Appendix B of the final EA at [www.boem.gov/oregonea](http://www.boem.gov/oregonea).

The draft EA analyzes the Proposed Action, which is the issuance of wind energy leases within the Oregon WEAs, and the No Action Alternative. The issuance of a lease by BOEM to a lessee conveys no right to proceed with construction of a wind energy facility. BOEM may decide to issue leases within all, a portion, or none of the WEAs analyzed in the EA. Therefore, the EA considers the reasonably foreseeable environmental consequences of site characterization surveys (i.e., biological, archeological, geological and geophysical surveys, and core samples) and site assessment activities (i.e., installation of meteorological buoys), which are expected to take place following lease issuance. Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and its implementing regulations, BOEM is preparing an EA for this proposed action to assist the agency’s planning and decision-making (40 CFR 1501.5(b)).

**BOEM received 350 comments on the draft EA.** Comments were received from federal agencies, state agencies, local agencies, Tribes, non-governmental organizations, and individuals.

The following themes emerged as particular concern to commenters, but not all fell within the scope of BOEM’s NEPA analysis:

-  Potential impacts on marine habitats and wildlife.
-  Potential impacts on commercial fishing and maritime industries.
-  Meaningful engagement with affected communities.
-  Potential economic and renewable energy benefits.
-  Coordination with Oregon Offshore Wind Roadmap.



BOEM Oregon Draft EA comments received by topic.



## Potential impacts on marine habitats and wildlife

Commenters encouraged BOEM to critically analyze the potential negative impacts on marine habitats and wildlife caused by site assessment and characterization activities in the final EA. 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. Many commenters requested BOEM conduct an environmental impact statement (EIS) for floating offshore wind for the West Coast broadly before issuing leases to developers rather than evaluating leasing activities alone.



## Potential impacts on commercial fishing and maritime industries

Many commenters expressed concerns about potential negative impacts of floating offshore wind (FOSW) farms on the commercial fishing industry and other maritime industries (e.g. shipping) though this will be evaluated in a future NEPA process when more information is available. These concerns centered on possible damage or disruption of important fish habitat and migration corridors, reduced access to fishing sites for fishing vessels, and impediments to shipping vessel routes. Commenters noted sections in the draft EA related to commercial fishing and fish habitats need additional analysis in the final EA.



## Meaningful engagement with affected communities

Multiple commenters urged BOEM to engage with affected communities in transparent ways that acknowledge their concerns. Some commenters were critical of BOEM's engagement efforts thus far and supported more opportunities in the future for input from members of the public, local government, and the fishing and maritime industries. Many Tribal commenters requested that BOEM pursue its Tribal consultation obligations in more genuine ways and to more deeply consider potential impacts on Tribal natural and cultural resources.



## Potential economic and renewable energy benefits

Many commenters recognized the potential for FOSW to create jobs and additional sources of renewable energy. Comments highlighted that construction, operations, maintenance, and eventual decommissioning of FOSW turbines could bring new jobs to coastal communities while also helping the state and country transition to more renewable sources of energy.



## Coordination with Oregon Offshore Wind Roadmap

Commenters encouraged BOEM to pause the lease sale until the state of Oregon completes its Offshore Wind Roadmap in the fall of 2025 so that BOEM and state processes are more aligned. The Roadmap is intended to provide a vision and standards for how Oregon could incorporate OSW while considering the environment, existing ocean uses, cultures, and communities.



## Other comments

Several commenters expressed concern about impacts to coastal tourism and recreation. Commenters raised concerns about the cost-effectiveness of FOSW as a source of energy relative to other sources of energy. Commenters noted concerns about the viability of FOSW in waters as deep as those in the designated leasing areas off the Oregon coast and as close to the Cascadia Subduction Zone. Several commenters encouraged BOEM to consider the potential impacts of energy transmission landing on shore in the final EA.