

Renewable Energy Fact Sheet



The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) promotes energy independence, environmental protection and economic development through responsible, science-based management of energy and mineral resources on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). BOEM is responsible for overseeing offshore renewable energy development in federal waters in an economically and environmentally responsible way.

While BOEM's offshore renewable energy portfolio consists of several resources—including ocean wave and ocean current energy—offshore wind energy has garnered the most interest to date.

Safe, reliable and affordable domestic energy production powers our economy, promotes jobs and is critical to our nation's security. Offshore wind is an abundant and efficient alternative domestic energy resource found close to major **coastal cities, where more than half of the U.S. population resides** and energy needs are high. Compared to onshore wind, **offshore winds are generally stronger and more consistent**. Since higher wind speeds can produce significantly more energy and electricity, there is increasing interest in developing offshore wind energy on the OCS.

*Almost **half of the U.S. population** lives **near coastal areas** where **offshore winds** are typically **stronger and more consistent***

Demand for offshore wind energy has never been greater. Technological advances, falling costs, increased interest and tremendous economic potential make offshore wind the most promising avenue for diversifying the national energy portfolio.

Significant job growth is expected in several offshore wind industries, including manufacturing, construction, supply chain, operations, maintenance and transportation. Increased job opportunities are also expected in restaurants, hotels and other service industries.

Under the Energy Policy Act of 2005, BOEM facilitates the responsible development of renewable energy resources on the OCS through conscientious planning, stakeholder engagement, comprehensive environmental analysis and sound technical review.

For any proposed OCS development, BOEM evaluates the potential impacts on ocean users, historic and cultural resources and the marine environment. BOEM uses a multi-phased process to grant access to ocean areas that are suitable for wind energy development that consists of the following phases:



Planning and Analysis – Identify **potential areas for wind energy** leasing through collaborative, consultative and analytical processes. Conduct environmental compliance reviews and consultations with Tribes, states and natural resource agencies.



Leasing – Issue **commercial wind energy leases**, through either a competitive or a noncompetitive process. Commercial leases give the lessee exclusive rights to develop and submit development plans for BOEM approval, however no facility construction would occur.



Site Assessment and Characterization – Conduct site characterization surveys and studies (e.g., avian, marine mammal, archaeological). A **Site Assessment Plan (SAP)** is required for meteorological towers or other facilities to be installed on the seabed using a fixed-bottom foundation with professional engineering design. However, BOEM must approve the SAP before the lessee conducts these activities.



Construction and Operations – The lessee uses the SAP information to draft a **Construction and Operations Plan (COP)**, which details a wind energy project's construction and operations plan. Once a complete COP following the Notice of Intent Checklist is received, BOEM conducts environmental and technical reviews of the COP before deciding whether to approve, modify, or deny the plan. The developer must submit a plan to decommission facilities prior to the end of the lease term.

BOEM engages key stakeholders throughout these processes to ensure early communication with interested and potentially affected parties. This is critical to managing potential conflicts. In addition, BOEM has established Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Forces for areas where there is interest in developing offshore renewable energy. Each task force collects and shares information that would be useful and relevant to BOEM's decision making process. BOEM is also integrating regional perspectives into the task forces to better utilize the shared regional interests and concerns between states.

BOEM also engages the task forces – as well as a broad spectrum of agencies, universities and other stakeholders – to identify critical data gaps and fund studies on areas for renewable energy development where physical and biological environment information may be lacking.

