

BOEM Seeks Public Comment on Draft Environmental Analysis of Central California Offshore Wind Energy Area

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CAMARILLO, Calif. -- As part of the Biden-Harris administration's goal of deploying 30 gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind energy by 2030, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) today announced the release of the draft Morro Bay Wind Energy Area (WEA) Environmental Assessment (EA) for public comment. The draft EA analyzed potential impacts from future commercial leasing and related site characterization and assessment activities within the Morro Bay WEA, which is located approximately 20 miles off the central California coastline.

The Morro Bay WEA covers approximately 240,898 acres (376 square miles), which if developed could bring to the grid up to 3 GW of clean energy -- enough to power more than 1 million homes. The WEA was designated after extensive collaboration with other Federal agencies and the State of California, as well as engagement with ocean users, Tribes, local communities and the public. Designation of the Morro Bay WEA underscores BOEM's commitment to an all-of-government approach to achieve the Administration's ambitious offshore wind energy goals while conserving and restoring ocean and coastal habitats.

The draft EA considers potential environmental impacts and socioeconomic effects from issuing offshore wind energy leases and related site characterization and assessment activities within the Morro Bay WEA. Site characterization activities include geophysical, geotechnical, archaeological and biological surveys needed to develop specific project proposals on those potential leases. Site assessment activities could include installation and operation of meteorological buoys in the Morro Bay WEA.

"Public input on our environmental analysis and identified measures to avoid or reduce potential impacts from leasing activities is an important part of our process under the National Environmental Policy Act," said **BOEM's Pacific Office Regional Director, Doug Boren**. "BOEM will analyze and consider all comments before we finalize our analysis."

Before approving the construction of any offshore wind energy facility on a potential future lease in the Morro Bay WEA, BOEM will develop an Environmental Impact Statement to analyze the specific environmental consequences of constructing and operating such a facility, in consultation with Tribes and appropriate federal, state and local agencies and with participation by ocean users, stakeholders and the public.

BOEM is also requesting public comments related to potential impacts to historic properties from commercial leasing and site characterization and assessment activities in the Morro Bay WEA. This is part of BOEM's National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Programmatic Agreement with the State of California covering wind energy development offshore that state.

Today's announcement initiates a 30-day public review and comment period on the draft EA, which will end at 11:59 p.m. (Eastern) on Friday, May 6, 2022.

To facilitate public input, BOEM will host two virtual meetings. The first meeting will be held April 14, 2022, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. The second will be held April 19, 2022, from 9 a.m. to noon. (Meeting times listed are in Pacific Time.)

The draft EA, instructions on how to submit comments, and information on the public meetings can be found online at: www.boem.gov/morro-bay

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