

## In First Commercial Scale Effort, Biden Administration Approves Offshore Wind Agreement in California

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On May 25, the Biden administration announced an effort with the State of California to advance certain areas of California's northern and central coastal waters for offshore wind farms opening up the Pacific Coast to its first commercial scale offshore clean energy projects. The development could bring up to 4.6 gigawatts of renewable energy to the grid, or enough to power 1.6 million homes. Because the outer continental shelf falls away much more quickly into much deeper waters in the Pacific Ocean than it does in the Atlantic Ocean, new floating offshore wind technology will need to be deployed in order to harness that energy. Several major offshore wind developers registered their interest in developing floating offshore wind off California following a BOEM request for proposals in 2019.

Together, the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Department of Defense identified an area around 400 square miles northwest of Morro Bay that can support three gigawatts of offshore wind. In northern California, the Humboldt Call Area is also being advanced as a potential renewable energy area. "Today's announcement reflects months of active engagement and dedication between partners who are committed to advancing a clean energy future," said Interior Secretary Deb Haaland. BOEM, in partnership with California, will hold an Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force meeting on June 24, 2021, to discuss the identified areas off the north and central coasts as potential Wind Energy Areas. The Wind Energy Areas will then undergo environmental analysis and BOEM will undertake government-to-government tribal consultation. The federal government plans to hold a single lease auction for both the Morro Bay and Humboldt Call sites in mid-2022.

Offshore winds are usually stronger and more consistent than land-based wind energy, thus the development of offshore wind would help California reach its carbon-free energy goal by 2045 as well as the U.S.'s goal of 30 gigawatts of offshore wind capacity by 2030. "Developing offshore wind to produce clean, renewable energy could be a game-changer to achieving California's clean energy goals and addressing climate change – all while bolstering the economy and creating new jobs," Governor Gavin Newsom said.

Two weeks ago, the Biden administration announced the final approval of a \$3 billion project off the coast of Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts that would power 400,000 homes with 84 turbines generating about 800 megawatts. The generation of electricity from offshore wind on the U.S. west coast has the potential in the long term to be greater than the generation on the U.S. east coast.

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