

BOEM Requests Feedback on New Offshore Wind Leasing Areas

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The U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) issued a notice in the *Federal Register* on April 6, 2018 requesting public feedback on identification of new U.S. East Coast offshore areas for wind energy development. Comments are due by May 21, 2018.

BOEM is the U.S. Government agency that leases offshore areas on the U.S. outer continental shelf for energy development. BOEM has issued 13 leases for the development of offshore wind from Massachusetts to North Carolina. The power potential for these 13 lease areas is approximately 15 gigawatts. BOEM indicated that there has been a recent increase in the number of unsolicited lease applications it has received.

BOEM seeks public comment on factors used in its planning for the identification of future areas for offshore wind development. Areas identified using these planning factors will still undergo rigorous wind energy area assessments, as well as site-specific environmental and other analyses, before areas are leased and projects approved.

BOEM seeks comment on three “exclusionary” planning factors and seven “positive” factors.

The “exclusionary” factors would be used to identify “no-go” areas, which are where the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) prohibits energy development (e.g., the national marine sanctuaries), Department of Defense “conflict areas” as identified by DoD, and maritime navigation conflict areas.

The “positive” factors are: areas not previously removed from consideration; areas greater than 10 nautical miles from shore; areas shallower than 60 meters in depth; areas adjacent to states with offshore wind economic incentives; areas adjacent to states that have an interest in identifying additional lease areas; areas in which industry has expressed an interest; and areas with resource and locational potential.

Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island all have offered incentives to offshore wind development. The states that have established intergovernmental task forces to facilitate stakeholder engagement are Massachusetts, New York, and South Carolina.

BOEM also noted in its request that it would continue to consider unsolicited lease requests both inside and outside planning areas.

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