

BOEM Offshore Wind Open House

Wednesday May 29, 2024

5-8 p.m.

Format: Poster session w/ one on one Q&A and plenary presentation session, followed by more time for posters.

All upcoming BOEM meetings will be posted on their website

The purpose of this open house is to discuss the proposed sale notice. Right now, BOEM is taking feedback on the size, orientation and location of the 8 proposed offshore wind leasing areas. They are taking public comment until July 1st, 2024. Public comment made during the meeting will be summarized and put into public record and posted on federalregister.gov. There was also an opportunity to submit public comment online or via written or verbal communication at a table. If the proposed sale notice moves forward, they will proceed with requesting an environmental assessment of each leasing area and posting a final sale notice for contractors to bid on (?).

They also just announced a **research lease** on Monday May 27th from the State of Maine.

Research Lease:

- Only applicable for federal agencies or approved commercial, non-competitive agencies
- What was announced on Monday was the environmental assessment done between the two parties for a research lease (State of Maine and BOEM)
- The purpose of the research lease is to inform the commercial permitting process (focuses on researching all impacts, especially environmental)

The different subject areas being discussed tonight in terms of the leasing areas are the technology, economics of leasing, ecology/biology impacts, and NOAA data.

During the presentation, the main talking points included the commercial leasing process, the proposed sales notice and all of its components and addendums, the research lease with Maine announced this week and the potential timeline for this whole project (still up to, if not more than 10 years until offshore wind project completion).

State renewable energy goals in Maine and Massachusetts helped to shape this Gulf of Maine Offshore Wind project with BOEM. New Hampshire does not have a state renewable energy goal or plan which made BOEM staff think that NH may not be interested in buying any of this energy when it does come online (this is very troublesome, hopefully the PUC can have a say in this – without the demand from the State, we also may have a hard time bringing transmission infrastructure into NH (like Schiller) that feeds directly from the offshore turbines.

- The Commonwealth of MA stated they have goals for 10 gigawatts of renewable energy in their portfolio
- State of Maine stated they have goals for 3 (?) gigawatts of renewable energy

- ISO New England has estimated that New England in general will need up to 18 GW of renewable energy within its portfolio

Proposed Sales Notice:

- This has been drafted, going through the public review comment process for 60 days (until July 1) and is then tweaked/finalized.
- After final sales notice, an auction is put on (likely in October of 2024)
 - In the auction, a lease is issued to a development team to develop a construction and operations plan (this is like a site assessment phase and could take up to five years to develop)
- Once the construction and operations plan is complete, it is submitted to BOEM for review and the developer begins their Environmental Assessment
- There are 8 proposed leasing areas in the Gulf of Maine
 - Estimated to bring in altogether a potential of 16 gigawatts of energy
 - The average lease area size is 120,000 acres
 - Closest to land that they get is 25 miles offshore
 - These areas are oriented to face from the northwest to the southwest with some east/west orientations
 - These orientations were made to leave channels in between each leasing area for boat traffic

Development Lease Details

The issuance of a lease to a developer just offers the exclusive right to a developer to create a site assessment and construction/operations plan.

Some terms of these leases will include:

- A progress report every six months that documents ongoing stakeholder engagement done by the developer
- Survey plans
- Protected species
- Project labor agreements for the construction period
- Bidding credit (this is really interesting but I had trouble following along with how this is offered and calculated – like a discount from the government?). Bidding credits are capped at 25%. Bu this does help establish something called a ‘fisheries compensatory mitigation fund’

Auction Format

- Three regional leasing areas (North/South/East)
- Developer cannot hold an area in each lease region

- Can hold no more than two in the south
- Cannot hold more than one in the north

Community Feedback:

- Lots of angry community members at this meeting (were swearing, had a lot to yell about and were very emotional)
- Many fisherman in the room (sometimes fifth generation)
- Very concerned about their livelihoods, the right whale populations, bird injuries, the cost to taxpayers
- Very worried that these will not be American companies getting the leases
 - Specifically, do not want foreign companies setting up HQ in Maine and then leaving and paying no taxes
 - Also, very worried about terrorism or national security threats to the infrastructure