BOEM, DOD SIGN MOU ON ADVANCING OFFSHORE WIND DEVELOPMENT

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On Tuesday, 29 October 2024, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and the Department of Defense (DOD) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen the coordinated development of offshore wind energy generation on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS).[1] Because BOEM and DOD share responsibility for integrating military preparedness requirements in offshore wind project plans, the MoU defines, clarifies, and institutionalizes these roles and duties—specifically during offshore wind leasing and project review—to ensure offshore wind projects bolster US energy security while minimizing impacts to military operations. As developers move forward with offshore wind projects, this MoU is an important development to help streamline the regulatory and interagency processes potentially facilitating quicker project commercialization.

Specifically, the MoUcalls for "DOD and BOEM to:

- Find mutual solutions that support renewable energy in a manner compatible with essential military operations;
- Collaborate as early as possible in the offshore wind leasing process;
- Regularly communicate and exchange information at the staff and leadership levels; and
- Determine what areas should be deferred from leasing to enable the performance of DOD activities on the OCS."

BOEM Director Elizabeth Klein said that "[BOEM's] collaboration with the Department of Defense is crucial to ensure offshore wind development is carried out efficiently and sustainably while minimizing impacts to military operations," while Brendan Owens, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations, and Environment, committed to working with interagency partners to advance offshore wind development "while ensuring long-term compatibility with testing, training, and operations critical to our military readiness."

This action is the latest interagency collaboration in the Biden-Harris administration's effort to advance offshore wind capacity. It follows the May 2024 release offinalized regulations from BOEM and the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE), which seek to streamline the permitting process for and decrease the costs associated with deploying offshore wind projects on the OCS, and a September 2023 MoU between nine East Coast states and four federal agencies to strengthen regional collaboration on offshore wind supply chain development. Other actions include a September 2023 action plan from the Department of Energy (DOE) and BOEM providing recommendations to address offshore wind transmission challenges for the Atlantic Coast, and a joint strategy released by BOEM and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in January

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2024 outlining how offshore wind capacity should be responsibly developed to protect and promote the recovery of North Atlantic right whales. Due to these and other efforts, the Biden-Harris administration has approved ten offshore wind projects since President Biden was inaugurated, permitting a total of 15 gigawatts of offshore wind capacity.

The press release from BOEM is available here.

The press release from DOD is available here.

FOOTNOTES

[1] OCS is defined as "all submerged lands lying seaward of state coastal waters which are under US jurisdiction."

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