



California Coastal Commission

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FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on

Coastal Commission Hearings on Offshore Wind Energy Area Lease Sales

What are the offshore wind energy area lease sales?

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) has identified two offshore areas for potential wind energy development in federal waters off California: the Humboldt Wind Energy Area, about 20 miles offshore of Eureka in Humboldt County, and the Morro Bay Wind Energy Area, about 20 miles offshore of Cambria and San Simeon in San Luis Obispo County. BOEM plans to hold a lease sale at each site to allow lessees to conduct studies and potentially develop offshore wind within these areas in the future. Under its federal consistency review authority, the Coastal Commission will evaluate whether BOEM's proposed leasing process is consistent with the California Coastal Act. As part of its review, the Commission will consider lease exploration activities, including studies that a lessee would conduct to design a project (e.g., geophysical surveys, collecting sediment samples, placing buoys and instrumentation in the wind energy area) and potential future lease development activities, including installing and operating offshore wind turbines in the wind energy area and transporting the electricity produced to shore.

What is the California Coastal Commission?

The Coastal Commission is a state government agency that preserves and protects California's coast and ocean for the public. The Commission does this by looking at how development affects the environment and public coastal access. Agency staff makes recommendations to the Commissioners, who take a final vote. For federal projects on California's coast and ocean, the Commission has authority to review for consistency with California's Coastal Management Program, which consists primarily of the Coastal Act.

When will the Commission make a decision about the offshore wind lease sales?

The Commission is expected to vote on whether it finds BOEM's proposed lease sale and activities in each wind energy area consistent with the California Coastal Act at two separate hearings, one for each wind energy area. The Commission held a public hearing for the Humboldt Wind Energy Area at its April 2022 meeting. The Commission will consider the offshore wind energy area off of the Morro Bay coast at the June 2022 hearing. The Commission will hear from its staff, government representatives, and members of the public at each meeting. The public hearing is an opportunity to make your voice heard on the proposed project. All are welcome.

What is the staff recommending to the Commission?

The staff recommendation for Humboldt Bay has been conditionally concurred. Staff is still reviewing BOEM's Morro Bay documents and has not yet made a recommendation to the Commission. Issues of concern that staff will evaluate include potential impacts that lease exploration and future lease development activities at each offshore wind area may have on the fishing community, tribes, environmental justice communities, cultural resources, marine life, seafloor habitats, and visual and scenic resources.

How does this affect me?

You may be affected if you live or fish in the Humboldt Bay area or the Morro Bay area. Eventual development of the Humboldt Wind Energy Area would affect the Humboldt Bay area due to port development and significant transmission upgrades to support the offshore wind industry. It is not known at this time which port would be used to support development of the Morro Bay site. Eventual development of both wind energy areas has the potential to exclude certain types of fishing, change distribution of marine animals and seabirds, and change coastal viewsheds.

How can I participate?

- Review BOEM's documents and related materials online: <https://www.coastal.ca.gov/upcoming-projects/offshore-wind/>
- Email comments to osw@coastal.ca.gov
- Mail comments to 445 Market Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, CA 94105
- For questions, contact Holly Wyer, Senior Environmental Scientist at holly.wyer@coastal.ca.gov or (415) 904-5240