### ANNOUNCEMENT OF AREA IDENTIFICATION

### Commercial Wind Energy Leasing on the Outer Continental Shelf Offshore Rhode Island and Massachusetts

#### February 24, 2012

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is proceeding with competitive commercial wind energy leasing on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) offshore Rhode Island and Massachusetts, as set forth by 30 CFR 585.211 through 585.225. The next step in the competitive leasing process, and the purpose of this announcement, is Area Identification. BOEM defined a Wind Energy Area (WEA) offshore Rhode Island and Massachusetts pursuant to the Secretary of the Interior's *Smart from the Start* Atlantic Offshore Wind Initiative. This entire area will be considered for leasing and approval of site assessment plans as the proposed action under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. §§ 4321-4370f). BOEM also has identified alternatives to the proposed action that entail considering the exclusion of certain portions of the WEA and the issuance of leases and approval of site assessment in the remaining portions. This announcement also identifies mitigation measures and other issues to be considered further in the NEPA document.

On August 18, 2011, BOEM published in the *Federal Register* the *Commercial Leasing for Wind Power on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Offshore Rhode Island and Massachusetts-Call for Information and Nominations* (Call) (76 FR 51383-51391) and *Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Assessment* (NOI) (76 FR 51391-51393). The area identified in the Call and NOI is located within the Area of Mutual Interest (AMI), as described by a Memorandum of Understanding between the Governors of Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

The Call included certain areas that, if ultimately developed with commercial wind energy facilities, would likely cause substantial conflict with existing fishing uses. BOEM has excluded these "high value" fishing grounds from the WEA. Therefore, these areas will not be considered for leasing or approval of site assessment plans in this NEPA document. The remainder of the Call Area will be considered for leasing and approval of site assessment plans in an environmental assessment (EA) (see Figure 1, Alternative A). Figure 1 depicts the high value fishing grounds removed from leasing consideration as "Excluded Area."

Alternatives to the proposed action (Alternative A) were defined by excluding certain areas of the WEA because of the following considerations:

- Areas identified as having occurrences of North Atlantic right whales, which are of concern due to potential impacts to this species (see Figure 2, Alternative B);
- All areas within 15 nautical miles of the inhabited coastline of Massachusetts, which are of concern due to potential visual impacts (see Figure 3, Alternative C)
- All areas within 21 nautical miles of the inhabited coastline of Massachusetts, which are of concern due to potential visual impacts (see Figure 4, Alternative D); and
- All areas identified by Verizon Communications Inc. as containing telecommunication cable(s), which are of concern due to potential interference or other impacts (see Figure 5, Alternative E).

The agency is currently only considering the issuance of leases and approval of site assessment plans in this area. BOEM is not considering, and the EA does not support, any decision(s) regarding the construction and operation of any wind energy facility on leases that may be issued in this WEA. If, after leases are issued, a lessee proposes to construct a commercial wind energy facility, it would submit a construction and operations plan. If and when BOEM receives such a plan, it would prepare a site-specific NEPA document for the project proposed, that would include the lessee's proposed transmission line(s) to shore. These cable routes would underlie areas outside of the WEA, and may include areas beneath these "high value" fishing grounds.

BOEM has also identified mitigation measures that may reduce the potential for adverse impacts to North Atlantic right whales. Such measures include seasonal restrictions, vessel speed restrictions, and enhanced monitoring. These measures, and possibly others, will be analyzed in the EA, and if adopted, could be imposed as binding requirements in the form of stipulations in the lease instrument and/or conditions of approval of a site assessment plan. Based upon staff recommendations; consultations with Federal agencies, states, local governments, and affected Indian tribes; and public comments received, BOEM will continue to consider additional measures that may reduce the potential for adverse environmental consequences, and may identify other issues to be considered in the EA.

## Figure 1. Wind Energy Area identified offshore Rhode Island and Massachusetts for analysis as the Proposed Action (Alternative A) in the EA.

6709 6710	6711	6712	6713	6714	6715	6716	6717	6718	6719	6720		
6760	6761	6762	6763	A B 6764	6765	L O P	6767	6768	6769	6770		
6810	6811	6812	6813	6814	6815 P	B C D F G H 6816 I J K L M N O P	6817	6818	6819	6820		$\bigcirc$
6860	6861	6862	6863	6864	6865 C D F G H J K L M N O P	6866	A B C D E 6867 M	6868	6869	6870	6871	6872
	6911	6912	6913	б914 <mark>в н</mark>	A B C D E F G H	A B C D E F G H 6916 K L O P	A         6917           E         F         G         H           I         J         K         L           M         N         O         P	B C D F G H I J K L M N O P	6919	6920	6921	6922
6959 6960	6961	6962	6963	6964 с р к L	6965	E F G H 6966 I J K L M N O P	6967	6968	6969	A B C D E F G H I J M <b>6970</b>	A B C D E F G H	6972
Wind Ene	•/		7013	7014 J N O P	B C D 7015	A B C D E F G H	A B C D E F G H	E F G H	A B C D E 7019	7820	77021 C D E F G H I J K L	7022
Fed/State Precautio Separatio			7063	7064	A B 7065 E F G H I J K L M N O P	t066           E         F         G         H           I         J         K         L           M         N         O         P	<b>T 057</b> E F G H I J K L M N O P	7068 E F G H I J K L M N O P	7069	A 7079 E F G H I J K L M N O P	<b>1071</b> E F G H I J K L M N O P	7072
Traffic Lar	ne		7113	7114	7115	7116	7117	7118	7119 NK19-07	7120 Provider	7121 nce	7122
C Official Pr	al Miles		6014	6015	6016	6017	6018	6019	NK19-10 6020	Block Is 6021	and Shelf 6022	6023
0 2 4	4 6	8									Map ID: PAG	B-2011-1139

# Figure 2. Areas identified as having occurrences of North Atlantic right whales for analysis as Alternative B in the EA.

6709	6710	6711	6712	6713	6714	6715	6716	6717	6718	6719	6720		$\nearrow$
	6760	6761	6762	6763	6764	6765	L O P	6767	6768	6769	6770		
	6810	6811	6812	6813	6814	6815 P	B C D F G H I J K L M N O P	6817	6818	6819	6820	N	$\triangleleft$
(	6860	6861	6862	6863	6864	6865 C D F G H J K L M N O P	6866	A B C D E 6867	6868	6869	6870	6871	6872
	$\int$	6911	6912	6913	б914 <sup>G н</sup>	A B C D E F G H 6915	A B C D E F G H 6916 K L	A 6917 E F G H I J K L M N O P	B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P	6919	6920	6921	6922
6959	6960	6961	6962	6963	с D 6964 <mark>6 н</mark> к L	6965	€ F D C F D C C F F F F F F F F F F F F F	6967	6968	6960	▲ ⓑ ⓒ ô ⓒ ⓒ ô ô ñ ▲ 6970	6971	6972
	Wind Energy Area				7014	7015	A B C D E F G H 7016	A B C D E F G H 7017	A B C D E F G H 7018	A B C D E 7019	7020	7021 0 B	7022
Fed/State Boundary Precautionary Area				7063	7064	A B <b>7055</b> E F G H I J K L M N 0 P	F         G         H           I         J         K         L           M         N         O         P	F         G         H           I         J         K         L           M         N         O         P	F         G         H           I         J         K         L           M         N         O         P	7069	A 7070 E F G H I J K L M N O P	F         G         H           I         J         K         L           M         N         O         P	7072
Separation Zone Traffic Lane OCS Lease Blocks				7113	7114	7115	7116	7117	7118	7119 NK19-07	7120 Provider	7121	7122
Official Protraction Diagram				6014	6015	6016	6017	6018	6019	NK19-10 6020	Block Is 6021	and Shelf 6022	6023
0	2 4	6	8									Map ID: PAC	B-2011-1142

## Figure 3. Areas within 15 nautical miles of the inhabited coastline of Massachusetts identified for analysis as Alternative C in the EA.

6709	6710	6711	6712	6713	6714	6715	6716	6717	6718	6719	6720		
	6760	6761	6762	6763	a B E 6764	6765	1000 1000 1000 1000 1000 1000 1000 100	67.67	6768	6769	6770	2	
$\mathbf{b}$	6810	6811	6812	6813	6814	6815 P	B C D F E B 6816 1 P M N O	6817	6818	6819	6820		
(	6860	6861	6862	6863	6864	6865 C D F G H J K L M N O P	6866	<u>р</u> 6867 м	6868	6869	6870	6871	6872
	$\int$	6911	6912	6913	б914 <sup>с н</sup>	A B C D E F G H 6915	A B C D E F G H 6916 K L O P	A 6917 E F G H I J K L M N O P	B C D E 6918 L I J B D M N D	6919	6920	6921	6922
6959	6960	6961	6962	6963	с р 6964 <mark>6 н</mark> к L	6965	C D E F G H G966 I J K L M N O P	6967	6968	6969	A B C D F F O H 1 J M 6970	A B C D. F F G H 6971	6972
	Wind Ene 15 nmi E	•		7013	7014 J N O P	B C D 7015 M N	A B C D E F G H 7016	A B C D E F G H 7017	A B C D E F G H 7018	A B C D E 7019	7020	7021 0 m	7022
		e Boundary onary Area		7063	7064	A B <b>7055</b> E F G H I J K L M N 0 P	F         G         H           I         J         K         L           M         N         O         P	F         G         H           I         J         K         L           M         N         O         P	F         G         H           I         J         K         L           M         N         O         P	7069	A 7070 E F G H I J K L M N O P	F         G         H           I         J         K         L           M         N         O         P	7072
Traffic Lane OCS Lease Blocks				7113	7114	7115	7116	7117	7118	7119 NK19-07	7120 Provider	7121 nce	7122
Contraction Diagram				6014	6015	6016	6017	6018	6019	NK19-10 6020	Block Is 6021	and Shelf 6022	6023
0	2 4	6	8									Map ID: PAC	B-2011-1143

## Figure 4. Areas within 21 nautical miles of the inhabited coastline of Massachusetts identified for analysis as Alternative D in the EA.

6709	6710	6711	6712	6713	6714	6715	6716	6717	6718	6719	6720		X
	6760	6761	6762	6763	6764	6765	I DE	6767	6768	6769	6770	2	
}	6810	6811	6812	6813	6814	6815	B C 0 F 5 11 1 J K 1 1 N 0 P	6817	6818	6819	6820		
	6860	6861	6862	6863	6864	6865 C 0 F 5 H 1 K L M N 0 P	6866	A 8 9 0 E 6867	6868	6869	6870	6871	687:
)	T	6911	6912	6913	6914 <b>6</b>	4 в с в с г к н 6915	A B C D I F C U 6916 B L 0 B	A         6917           t         t         s         n           1         s         n         t           1         s         n         t	8         C         0           6         F         S         H           6918         J         K         L           M         N         O         P	6919	6920	6921	692
6959	6960	6961	6962	6963	6964 с р к с	6965	C D E F G H 1 J R L M N O P	6967	6968	6969	A 8 C 6 E 5 6 A 1 3 4 6970	4 в с № € г в н 6971	697
Wind Energy Area				7013	7014 J N O P	B C D 7015	A B C 0 E F 0 H 7016	A B C D E F 6 H 7017	A B C D E F G B 7018	A B C O 5 7019	7020	7021 C D E F G H F K L	702
	Fed/State Boundary			7063	7064	A B 7065 E F G H I J K L M N O P	F         G         H           I         J         K         L           M         N         O         P	7067 E F G H I J K L M N O P	7068 E E S H I 3 R C M N 6 P	7069	A         7070           E         E         G         H           I         J         N         L           M         N         O         D	7071 5 5 6 4 1 4 6 6 1 8 0 6	707;
Traffic Lane				7113	7114	7115	7116	7117	7118	7119 NK19-07	7120 Provider	7121 ce	712;
	Nautica	1		6014	6015	6016	6017	6018	6019	NK19-10 6020	Block Is 6021	and Shelf 6022	6023
0	2 4	. 6	8									Map ID: PAC	B-2011-11-

## Figure 5. Areas identified by Verizon, Inc. as containing telecommunication cable(s) identified as Alternative E in the EA.

6709	6710	6711	6712	6713	6714	6715	6716	6717	6718	6719	6720		$\nearrow$
	6760	6761	6762	6763	A B 6764	6765	L O P	6767	6768	6769	6770		
	6810	6811	6812	6813	6814	6815 P	B C D F G H 6816 I J K L M N O P	6817	6818	6819	6820		$\triangleleft$
(	6860	6861	6862	6863	6864	6865 C D F G H J K L M N O P	6866	A B C D E 6867 M	6868	6869	6870	6871	6872
		6911	6912	6913	б914 <sup>с н</sup>	A B C D E F G H 6915	А В С D Е F G H 6916 К L 0 Р	A 6917 E F G H I J K L M N O P	B         C         D           E         F         G         H           I         J         K         L           M         N         O         P	6919	6920	6921	6922
6959	6960	6961	6962	6963	6964 с D к L	6965	C D E F G H I J K L M N O P	6967	6968	6969	A B C D E F G H I J M 6970	A B C D E F G H 6971	6972
	Wind Ene Cable Ex	• /		7013	7014	B C D 7015 M N	A B C D E F G H 7016	е <b>г</b> д н 7017	A B C D E F G H 7018	A B C D E 7019 P		7021 C D E F G H I J K L	7022
		e Boundary onary Area	/	7063	7064	%         %         7065           %         %         %         %           %         %         %         %           %         %         %         %           %         %         %         %           %         %         %         %           %         %         %         %	F         G         H           I         J         K         L           M         N         O         P	F         G         H           I         J         K         L           M         N         O         P	F         G         H           I         J         K         L           M         N         O         P	7069	A 7070 E F G H I J K L M N O P	FOT           E         F         G         H           I         J         K         L           M         N         O         P	7072
	Traffic La			7113	7114	7115	7116	7117	7118	7119 NK19-07	7120 Provider	7121 Ice	7122
Official Protraction Diagram				6014	6015	6016	6017	6018	6019	NK19-10 6020	Block Is 6021	and Shelf 6022	6023
0	2 4	4 6	8									Map ID: PAC	B-2011-1129