

Rhode Island – Massachusetts Area of Mutual Interest for Commercial Wind Development

Call for Information and Nominations and Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Assessment

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement
Public Information Meeting
New Bedford and Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts

September 20 & 21, 2011

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation & Enforcement

- Department of the Interior's Ocean Energy Agency
- Manage the nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral and energy resources on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS)



Call for Information and Nominations (Call) and Notice of Intent (NOI)

- BOEMRE issued the Call and NOI to prepare an environmental assessment (EA) for tracts within the Area of Mutual Interest (AMI) on August 18, 2011
- 45-day comment period ends on October 3, 2011
- Submit comments by email or regular mail (addresses given at end of presentation)

What is the AMI?

- The AMI is an area of the OCS south of RI and MA that the two states identified for joint consideration of wind energy leasing and development
- The AMI does *not* include blocks to the east off Massachusetts that are subject to a separate planning process
- BOEMRE plans to issue a separate Call for those Massachusetts blocks next month and will hold similar information meetings at that time

What is the Call?

- The Call is a request for information to begin the planning, analysis, and decision-making process for offshore wind development
- It is *not* a decision to lease
- It is an early step in the first of four stages in the process of authorizing offshore commercial wind development

Stage 1: Planning and Analysis

- Engage stakeholders and public; consult with affected federal, state, local, and tribal government officials (Intergovernmental Task Force)
- Publish Call and NOI
- Consider information received and announce Area Identification (Wind Energy Area)
- Conduct environmental compliance review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Complete consultations required by other laws (e.g., Endangered Species Act)

Stage 2: Leasing

- Offshore wind leases may be issued through a competitive or noncompetitive process
- The process to be used for the AMI will depend on the number and location of qualified nominations received in response to the Call

Stage 2: Leasing

- Continue to engage stakeholders and consult through the task force
- Publish leasing notices
 - Determination of No Competitive Interest (Noncompetitive)
 - Proposed and Final Sale Notices (Competitive)
- Issue Lease(s)
 - Negotiate lease (Noncompetitive)
 - Hold lease sale (Competitive)

Stage 2: Leasing

- Any lease that is issued will convey to the lessee only the right to prepare and submit plans required to proceed to the next stages—site assessment and commercial development
- The lessee must receive BOEMRE's approval of each plan before conducting site assessment or construction and operations

Stage 3: Site Assessment

- The lessee will conduct surveys (e.g., geological & geophysical, biological) on the leasehold
- If the lessee intends to install a bottom-founded data collection facility (e.g., meteorological mast or buoy), it must submit a Site Assessment Plan (SAP) for review and approval by BOEMRE
- BOEMRE conducts environmental and technical reviews of the lessee's site assessment plan (SAP)

Stage 3: Site Assessment

- The lessee has a site assessment term of up to 5 years to decide whether to proceed to the next stage—commercial development
- If the lessee decides to proceed to commercial development, it must submit a Construction and Operations Plan (COP) to BOEMRE for review and approval

Stage 4: Commercial Development

- The lessee's COP describes:
 - Overall site investigation results
 - Offshore and onshore support
 - Any proposed mitigation and monitoring and lease stipulation compliance
 - Design, fabrication, installation, and operations concepts
 - Decommissioning and site clearance concepts
- BOEMRE prepares an environmental impact statement (EIS) and conducts other necessary environmental and technical reviews and consultations

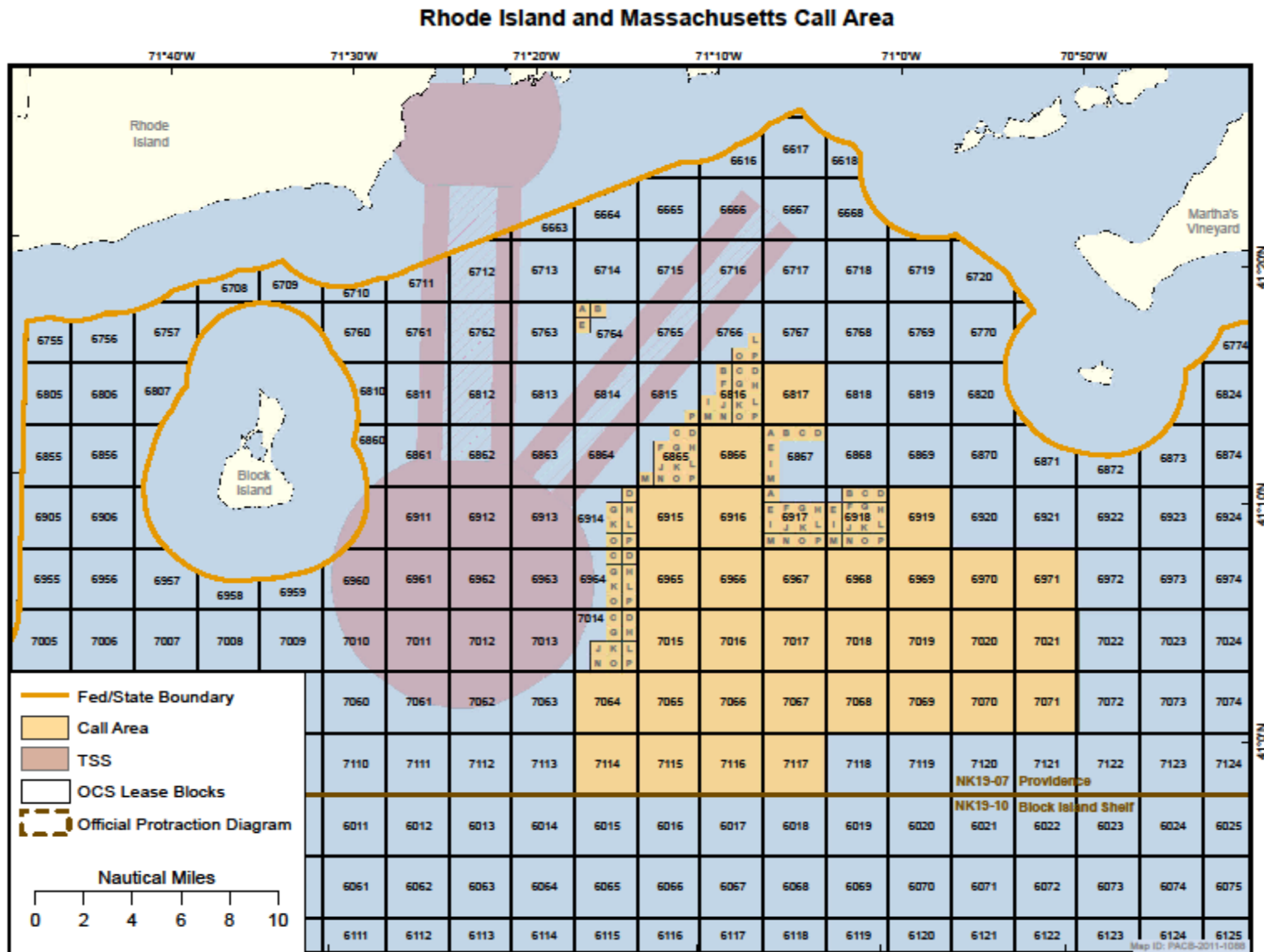
Stage 4: Commercial Development

- Lessee must prepare a Navigational Risk Assessment
- If BOEMRE approves the COP, the lessee will have a 25-year term in which to construct facilities and generate electricity
- After 25 years, lease expiration occurs and decommissioning is required unless a renewal is granted

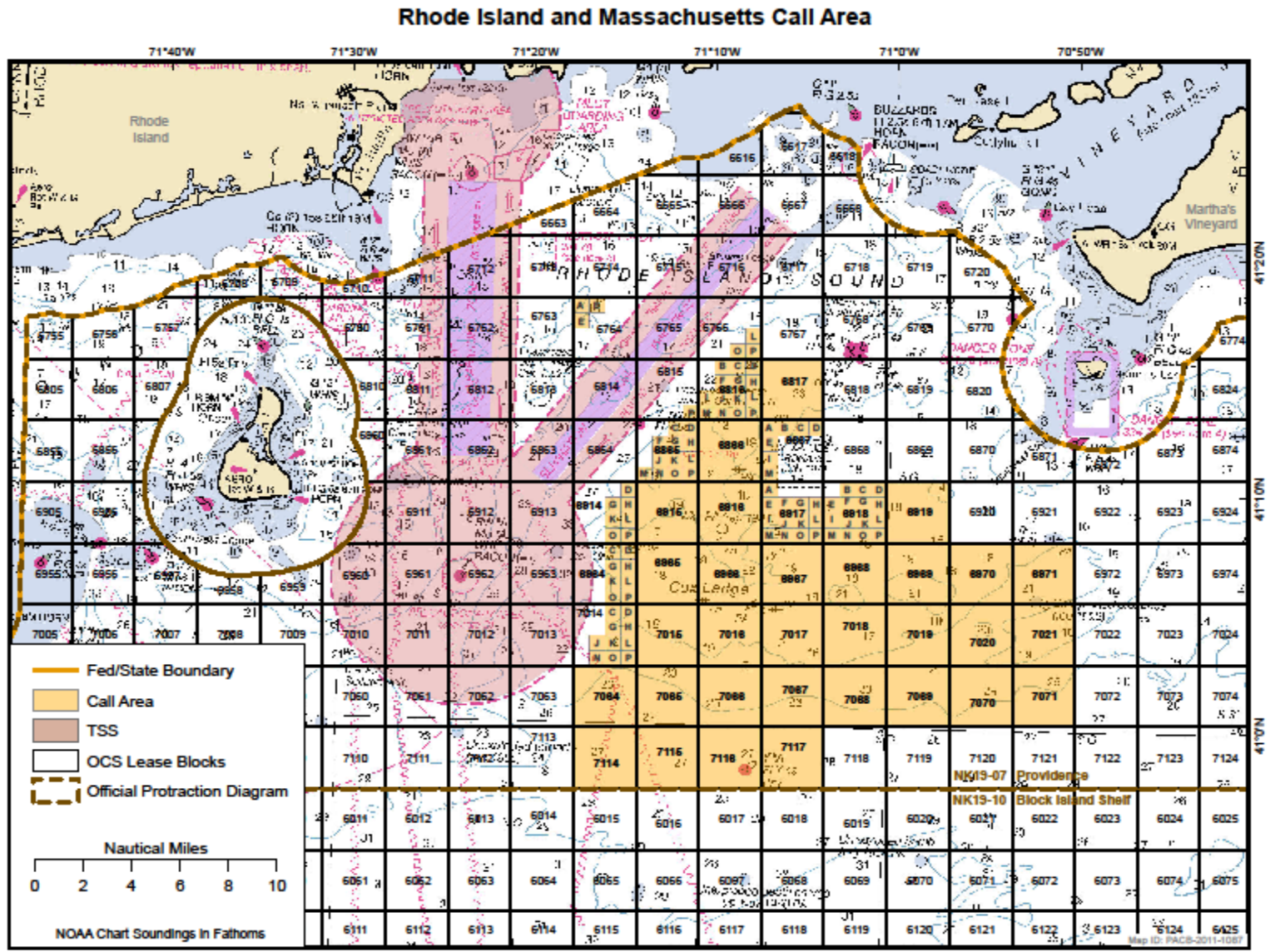
Opportunity for Public Comment

- All four stages provide for stakeholder engagement and public comment
 - Stakeholder meetings
 - Intergovernmental task force meetings:
public Q&A sessions
 - NOI to prepare an EA or EIS
 - Scoping meetings for EISs
 - Hearings and comment periods for draft EISs

The AMI Call Area



The AMI Call Area



Call and NOI: Next Steps

- BOEMRE developed the Call area in joint consultation with the Rhode Island and Massachusetts Intergovernmental Task Forces
- BOEMRE will complete Area Identification (establishment of a Wind Energy Area) after considering information received in response to the Call and NOI and consulting further with the task forces

Call and NOI: Next Steps

- The Wind Energy Area will form the basis for the proposed action to be analyzed in the EA that BOEMRE will prepare
- BOEMRE will formulate and analyze reasonable alternatives to the proposed action (e.g., mitigations, areal exclusions) in the EA
- BOEMRE also will complete consultations required by other laws

Preparation of the EA

- This will be the second EA prepared by BOEMRE for issuing commercial offshore wind leases
- The first—which analyzes the environmental impacts of lease issuance, site assessment, and site characterization activities for WEAs off New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia—will be completed soon
- BOEMRE will take a similar approach in preparing the EA for the Rhode Island – Massachusetts AMI

EA Scenario

- BOEMRE will develop a scenario consisting of routine and non-routine activities expected as a result of commercial wind lease issuance in the AMI
- Routine activities will include:
 - Site characterization surveys (shallow hazards, geological & geophysical, geotechnical, archaeological, biological)
 - Site assessment activities (installation of met masts and buoys)
- Non-routine activities will include:
 - Severe storms
 - Vessel collisions and allisions
 - Spills of oil or other pollutants

Analysis of Socioeconomic Conditions

- Archaeological resources
- Recreational resources
- Demographics and employment
- Environmental justice
- Land use and coastal infrastructure
- Commercial and recreational fishing activities
- Other uses of the area

Analysis of Physical and Biological Resources

- Physical Resources
 - Air quality
 - Water quality
- Biological Resources
 - Coastal habitats
 - Benthic resources
 - Marine mammals
 - Sea turtles
 - Birds and bats
 - Fish and essential fish habitat (EFH)

Alternatives that May Be Analyzed

- Geographic Alternatives
- Fishing Conflicts Alternatives
- Timing/Seasonal Alternatives
- Ship/Vessel Conflicts Alternatives
- No Action Alternative

Analysis of Cumulative Impacts

- Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions:
 - Onshore development
 - Existing port and waterway usage
 - Maritime traffic
 - Other renewable energy activities (e.g., in the Massachusetts area to the east)

Consultations

- National Historic Preservation Act
- Endangered Species Act
- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (EFH)
- Marine Mammal Protection Act
- Coastal Zone Management Act

EA Findings

- If the EA finds that lease issuance and site characterization and assessment activities will have significant impacts, BOEMRE will undertake preparation of an EIS
- If the EA results in a finding of no significant impact (FONSI), BOEMRE may issue commercial wind leases and approve SAPs based on that finding

Procedure for Approving SAPs

- Following completion of the EA/FONSI or EIS and issuance of leases, a lessee may submit a SAP for BOEMRE approval
- BOEMRE may approve, approve with modification, or disapprove the SAP
- In reviewing the SAP, BOEMRE would determine if the proposed SAP activities are adequately covered in the existing EA/FONSI or EIS

Procedure for Approving SAPs

- If BOEMRE finds that the existing EA/FONSI or EIS is adequate, it may take action on the SAP with no further NEPA analysis
- If BOEMRE finds that the existing EA/FONSI or EIS is inadequate for reviewing and acting on the SAP, it would prepare further NEPA analysis on that plan

Submitting Comments in Response to the Call and NOI

- The Call solicits nominations from potential lessees, as well as information from any interested or affected party who wishes to provide information on issues and resources including:
 - Geological and geophysical conditions
 - Archaeological and cultural resource sites
 - Historic properties
 - Other uses of the area
 - Other relevant socioeconomic, biological, and environmental information

Submitting Comments in Response to the Call and NOI

- The NOI requests interested and affected parties to identify:
 - Issues and alternatives to be considered in the EA
 - Potential mitigation measures
 - Sources of information relevant to the analysis

Comments are due Oct 3

- The Call and NOI are available online at:

www.boemre.gov/offshore/RenewableEnergy/StateActivities-RhodeIsland.htm

- You may email comments to www.regulations.gov. In the entry entitled “Enter Keyword or ID,” enter BOEM 2011-0063. Then click “search” and follow further instructions
- You may send comments by regular mail or hand delivery to:

Program Manager

Office of Alternative Energy Programs (MS 4090)

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