

STRENGTHENING THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL RENEWABLE ENERGY TASK FORCES



INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), an agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior, is committed to developing offshore renewable energy resources, including wind energy, in Federal waters.

BOEM is responsible for ensuring that offshore renewable energy development in federal waters is conducted in a responsible and sustainable manner.

A key mechanism that BOEM uses to help shape its approach to offshore renewable energy development is a series of Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Forces. These task forces — established in 14

coastal states — consist of representatives from federally recognized tribes, Federal agencies, states, and local governments.

BOEM's task forces serve as forums to coordinate planning, solicit feedback, educate about BOEM's processes, permitting, and statutory requirements, and exchange scientific and other information.

BOEM initiated the present review of its Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Forces to take stock of its efforts to-date, build on the strengths of its existing stakeholder engagement efforts, and ensure effective coordination among all interested and affected parties.



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items emerged from an evaluation of the intergovernmental task forces conducted for BOEM by the Consensus Building Institute (CBI) as described on the following page.

APPROACH

As the offshore wind development process moves beyond the leasing phase in many locations, BOEM is particularly interested in exploring how its intergovernmental task forces could evolve to support the next phases of offshore wind development.

BOEM engaged the CBI, who has extensive experience facilitating the task forces, to assist with its reevaluation.

The primary basis of CBI's work focused on 43 in-depth conversations with a representative cross-section of task force members (Federal, state, local, tribal and

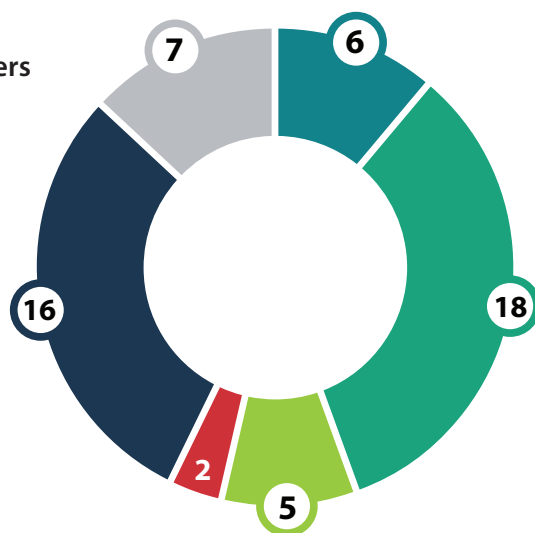
BOEM staff), as well as an additional seven conversations with current offshore wind leaseholders.

(CBI did not conduct conversations with other non-governmental stakeholders for this review due to the project's scope and resource constraints.)

CBI synthesized feedback from the conversations into a range of cross-cutting themes, highlighting the intergovernmental task forces' strengths and limitations and laying out possible strategies for moving forward.

Breakdown of CBI conversations:

- 6** (Non-BOEM) Federal Government Task Force Members
- 18** State Government Task Force Members
- 5** Local Government Task Force Members
- 2** Tribal Government Task Force Members
- 16** BOEM Staff Members
- 7** Representatives of Current Offshore Wind Lessees



ACTION ITEMS

In response to CBI's evaluation of the intergovernmental task forces, BOEM is taking the following steps to strengthen the intergovernmental task forces:



- 1** Strengthen task force dialogs to improve the quality and depth of discussions
- 2** Integrate regional perspectives into the state task forces
- 3** Customize post-leasing task forces by working with states
- 4** Enhance stakeholder engagement by building on and expanding the task force approach
- 5** Increase transparency of decision-making

Strengthen Task Force Dialogs to Improve the Quality and Depth of Discussions

The Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Forces serve as forums to:

- coordinate planning for offshore wind energy development
- identify the most promising areas for potential wind areas
- provide education about BOEM's

processes, permitting, and statutory requirements

- exchange information about biological and physical resources, ocean uses, and priorities.

CBI's process found strong support among task force participants for (1) BOEM staff

(both commitment and expertise), and (2) the overall purpose and concept of the task forces as a platform for bringing government and tribal representatives together to exchange information, learn about BOEM's process, and provide input and feedback to BOEM.

At the same time, the conversations suggested several concrete strategies to deepen the dialogue among Task Force members and with BOEM.

BOEM will take the following types of steps to strengthen task force dialogue:



Pre-Task Force Meetings:

- Announce meetings and provide meeting materials well in advance
- Collaborate with state partners to tailor and vary meeting content and format
- Keep current and make public task force member lists
- Ensure agency's website is up-to-date with relevant materials and discussion summaries.



At Task Force Meetings:

- Foster more frequent and consistent contact with task forces using diverse formats (in-person, webinar, email updates)
- Design meetings to enhance participant engagement and meeting effectiveness
- Make public comments more integral to meeting
- Provide ongoing updates on previously raised issues.



Post-Task Force Meetings:

- Make meeting summaries available online
- Create succinct "meeting in brief" documents
- Distribute updates via email and social media
- Respond to frequently asked questions.

Integrate Regional Perspectives into the State Task Forces

BOEM recognizes that offshore wind development has the potential to trigger concerns in neighboring states, from fishing and shipping impacts to view-shed considerations.

While single state-focused task forces work well for bringing small coastal communities into the discussion, a state-focused structure can also mask important regional concerns and risk leaving out-of-state interests sidelined or feeling marginalized.

The task force process, particularly during the wind energy identification phase, could benefit from incorporating consideration of these sorts of regional concerns.

BOEM will retain, but augment, the existing state task force structure to include regional perspectives and considerations.

BOEM will take the following types of steps to integrate regional perspectives into state task forces:

- Maintain a **checklist of regional topics and concerns** (e.g., fisheries, shipping, visual impacts) to consider within each state task force.
- Consult regularly with neighboring states, representatives of regionally focused entities, and Federal and state agency colleagues, and use mechanisms such as regional data portals, to identify **cross-state issues and user conflicts** specific to wind energy areas under consideration or being developed.
- Work with state contacts to **invite “ambassadors” or guest representatives** from neighboring state, local, and tribal jurisdictions and from regionally focused entities (such as fisheries management councils and ocean planning bodies) to state task force meetings.
- Make task force meetings more **accessible electronically** to encourage awareness beyond individual state borders.
- Hold **periodic regional meetings/sub-groups** on relevant topics (such as fisheries, target areas, protected species, etc.) to share learning across states.

On a case-by-case basis, BOEM will also continue to convene regional task forces (as is already being done, for example, with Massachusetts/Rhode Island). Regional

task forces may make sense when there are shared resources/overlapping uses, project impacts beyond state borders, and/or projects at state borders.

Customize Post-Leasing Task Forces by Working with States

As the offshore wind development process moves beyond the leasing phase, BOEM is particularly interested in exploring how the task forces could evolve to support the next phases of offshore wind development (site assessment and construction and operations).

The task forces can continue to serve as important venues for providing ongoing project updates and for governmental representatives to provide feedback to BOEM and to lessees about the development process.

In addition, the task forces can serve as forums to discuss **new leasing options, share research results and discuss specific siting concerns**, as well as provide a setting for developers to provide

briefings about their processes. Likely, **each state may opt to engage or emphasize different topics.**

BOEM will initiate discussions with relevant leadership in each state to define an appropriate role for task forces during the next phases of offshore wind development.

These discussions will include **identification of key discussion and decision points** during coming years to determine how frequently and at what points to hold in-person task force meetings, virtual meetings, other forums for engagement, etc.

Based on these discussions, the future direction and structure of each task force will be customized based on each state's interests.



Enhance Stakeholder Engagement by Expanding the Task Force Approach

Offshore wind development is moving forward in a landscape of diverse and established interests and concerns associated with existing ocean and coastal users.



With renewable energy as newcomer in this landscape, BOEM must be creative in its approach to securing buy-in and support from other stakeholders.

BOEM is already doing much to engage stakeholders. The task forces serve as a valuable forum for government and tribal representatives to come together, and BOEM staff members convene workshops up and down the Atlantic and Pacific coastal states to seek input from local communities, fishing interests and others potentially impacted by offshore wind energy development.

Yet BOEM is committed to doing more. While task force meetings are open to the public and each meeting includes opportunities for public input, BOEM recognizes the need to **expand its ongoing outreach and engagement efforts** to meaningfully

engage the full depth and breadth of stakeholder perspectives and concerns.



To this end, BOEM will work with each of its state partners to develop and implement **customized stakeholder outreach and engagement plans** to foster active engagement.

BOEM will also continue with its own stakeholder engagement efforts during the post-leasing phases of the process to ensure it is fulfilling its regulatory role.

Throughout all phases of the offshore wind development process, BOEM will ensure that the task forces and other relevant bodies remain actively involved in reviewing and discussing the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement plans (both approach and execution).



Increase Transparency of Decision-making

The renewable energy task forces serve as important forums for BOEM. As the task forces continue to evolve for the post-leasing stages of the offshore wind development process, BOEM recognizes the benefits of being more transparent in articulating how task force discussions, broader stakeholder input and ongoing research inform its decision-making on critical decisions around offshore wind development.



BOEM will strive to “close the loop” on issues and concerns raised during task force meetings. To strengthen the dialogs that take place at task force meetings, BOEM is exploring ways to be more transparent in its decision-making process.

Among the options being considered are:

- **“Close the loop”** on issues and concerns raised during task force meetings by government and tribal representatives as well as members of the public during public comment periods
- **Articulate action items and next steps** coming out of task force meetings and revisit these items in subsequent meetings to provide updates on how they have been addressed
- When needed, provide documentation that **explains the decision-making process and rationale** for decisions related to offshore wind energy development

CONCLUSION

The Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Forces have proven to be a highly effective tool to coordinate planning, identify promising sites, and provide and exchange information. BOEM is committed to making the task forces, and its broader stakeholder engagement processes, even

stronger in service of its mission to facilitate the responsible development of renewable energy resources on the Outer Continental Shelf through conscientious planning, stakeholder engagement, comprehensive environmental analysis, and sound technical review.