

**Testimony of
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U.S. Department of the Interior
Before the
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
April 20, 2021**

Chairman Lowenthal, Ranking Member Stauber, and members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM) role in developing America's renewable energy resources on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS).

My name is Amanda Lefton and I am the Director of BOEM. I am proud to have assumed this role and I am eager to pursue the Bureau's mission in developing America's offshore natural resources in an environmentally and economically sustainable way.

Background

As part of tackling the climate crisis, the Administration is committed to accelerating the nation's transition to a clean energy future. During his first week in office, President Biden issued Executive Order 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, that among other important initiatives, directed the Department of the Interior (Department) to increase renewable energy production in offshore waters. On March 29th, the White House held an important forum, where the Secretaries of the Interior, Energy, Commerce, and Transportation, state energy agencies, offshore wind developers, and labor representatives discussed key opportunities and challenges of expanding offshore wind.

As part of this forum, the Departments of the Interior, Energy, and Commerce committed to a target to deploy 30 gigawatts of offshore wind by 2030. The Department also announced the finalization of the New York Bight Wind Energy Areas, and the initiation of the review of what could be the third commercial project, Ocean Wind offshore New Jersey. In addition to these announcements, the other participating agencies, Departments of Transportation, Energy and Commerce, all advanced measures to encourage offshore wind development. Taken together, these announcements represent a sea change for our process, demonstrating an “all of Government” approach, that will catalyze the offshore wind industry in the United States. To achieve this important and ambitious strategy, I look forward to working with all of you to ensure our offshore renewable energy resources are developed with input from diverse partners and stakeholders, in an environmentally responsible way, while creating good-paying American jobs.

BOEM’s delegated authority to manage renewable energy development on the OCS gives us a critical role in implementing the Administration’s offshore wind agenda. Leasing activities to date include eight (8) competitive lease sales that have generated over \$472 million in high bids. We now have seventeen (17) active commercial-scale wind energy leases, including at least one off each state from Massachusetts to North Carolina. On these wind energy leases, BOEM has received fourteen (14) project development proposals submitted by industry. BOEM additionally has one research lease to investigate potential marine hydrokinetic sources offshore Oregon.

The finalization of the New York Bight Wind Energy Area, nearly 800,000 acres of shallow water between Long Island and the New Jersey coast, and the advancement of Ocean Wind, a commercial-scale project off the coast of New Jersey represent tangible progress towards

achieving the Administration's ambitious offshore wind agenda. These accomplishments are the product of BOEM's diligent work identifying wind energy areas based on environmental and multiple use considerations, industry participation, Tribal consultation, stakeholder outreach, public input, and cooperation with affected states. Moving forward, BOEM will continue to drive progress by creating a more certain process for offshore wind development for the industry, government partners, ocean users, such as the commercial fishing industry, and other stakeholders.

State interest in pursuing offshore renewable energy development is readily apparent through both enacted state legislation ensuring offtake for OCS wind energy production and publicly stated clean energy goals. BOEM anticipates continued interest in our Renewable Energy Program as we lead this valuable effort in support of the Nation's climate goals and efforts to accelerate job creation through clean renewable energy.

The legislation being discussed today is certainly related to BOEM's efforts to advance our offshore renewable energy program to achieve the Administration's ambitious offshore wind goals. Deploying 30 gigawatts of offshore wind by 2030 will require a trained workforce. Meeting this target could employ more than 44,000 workers in the offshore wind industry and create nearly 33,000 additional jobs in communities supported by offshore wind activity by 2030.

H.R. 998, the Offshore Wind Jobs and Opportunity Act, recognizes the need and opportunity to provide educational and career training programs for employment in the growing offshore wind industry. While the Department supports the goals of the legislation, we continue to review how it would integrate into the nascent offshore wind development program.

As BOEM continues to advance offshore wind projects in the Atlantic, we look forward to exploring possibilities in new areas as well. **HR 1689, the Offshore Renewable Energy for Territories Act**, would expand BOEM’s authority to manage renewable energy development under the OCS Lands Act to America’s territories and possessions. This creates an important opportunity for these regions to take advantage of their natural resources to further the energy security of their communities utilizing clean energy.

While we support the goals of the legislation, we would like the opportunity to further assess the details of H.R. 1689 and its implications for offshore wind development in both the territories and other OCS areas. For example, we note that it would require a “technological and long-term economic feasibility” study on conducting wind lease sales off the coasts of territories of the United States to be completed within 90 days of enactment and finalized within another 90 days after that. If intended to replace the existing process for the planning and analysis phase for potential wind energy areas, this legislation may severely limit many of the environmental studies and de-conflicting efforts that typically precede decisions on whether to offer an area for lease. We also note the importance of providing meaningful opportunities for territorial governments and public and private stakeholders to submit their input on development of renewable energy in these areas.

Two Presidential Memoranda issued on September 8, 2020, and September 25, 2020, sought to withdraw offshore federal areas in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico, Straits of Florida, and South Atlantic Ocean from consideration for offshore leasing between 2022 and 2032. **HR XXX, A Bill Restoring the Ability to Issue Offshore Wind Leases in Withdrawn Areas of the Eastern Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic Ocean**, would allow the Secretary of the

Interior to issue leases for renewable energy in those areas, while still forbidding leasing for oil and gas exploration and development. As discussed above, the Department and BOEM are working hard to expand opportunities to deploy offshore wind energy projects, and we support the goals of this legislation. With regard to the areas impacted by the previous Administration's withdrawals, we are continuing to work with the Department to evaluate the implications of those withdrawals and to examine all options moving forward.

Conclusion

Secretary Haaland has noted that, for generations we've put off the transition to clean energy, and now the offshore wind industry has the potential to create tens of thousands of good-paying, family-supporting jobs across the nation by 2030. President Biden has committed federal leadership to make it happen.

BOEM plays a vital role in advancing safe and responsible offshore energy development and securing renewable sources of energy is an obligation we take very seriously. BOEM is committed to active engagement with all stakeholders and partners to ensure the responsible development of renewable energy resources in federal waters and stands ready to work with the Subcommittee on all legislation before it. I look forward to our continued work together and to answering your questions today.