

# North Carolina Outer Continental Shelf Planning for Commercial Wind Leasing

## Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Assessment and BOEM Environmental Review Process

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management  
Public Information Meetings

January 2013



# What is an Notice of Intent?

- The NOI to prepare an Environmental Assessment is a Federal Register Notice published to:
  - Notify the public of BOEM's intent to prepare an EA
  - Solicit input on what resources and issues BOEM should consider in the EA
  - Identify alternatives to be considered in the EA
- The NC NOI was published in the Federal Register on December 13, 2012.

# What is an Environmental Assessment (EA)?

- Determine if an action has significant impacts
- Inform decision makers of the environmental consequences of a federal action
- Required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

# Preparation of the EA

- The Wind Energy Area (identified through Area ID) will form the basis for the proposed action analyzed in the EA
- The proposed action includes
  - Lease issuance
  - Associated site characterization (i.e. surveys)
  - Subsequent site assessment (construction and operation of meteorological towers and buoys).

# Preparation of the EA Cont.

- Have prepared three similar EAs for areas offshore multiple East Coast states
  - Mid-Atlantic EA (NJ, DE, MD, and VA)
  - RI/MA EA
  - MA EA
- BOEM will take a similar approach in preparing the EA for North Carolina
- Previous EAs can be found here:  
<http://boem.gov/renewable-energy-program/smart-from-the-start/index.aspx>



# EA Scenario

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

# EA Scenario

- BOEM will not consider commercial wind development (i.e. wind facility construction) in this EA
- The environmental impacts of a commercial wind facility would be analyzed when/if a lessee submits a COP. This would take the form of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

# Environmental and Socioeconomic Resources Considered

## ■ Physical

- Air Quality
- Water Quality

## ■ Biological

- Marine Mammals
- Sea Turtles
- Fish and Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)
- Coastal Habitats
- Benthic Resources
- Avian and Bat Species

## ■ Socioeconomic

- Commercial and Recreational Fishing Activities
- Aesthetics and Visual Impacts
- Cultural Resources
- Military Uses
- Environmental Justice
- Land Use and Coastal Infrastructure
- Tourism and Recreation
- Demographics and Employment



# Examples of Alternatives that May Be Analyzed

- Geographic Alternatives
- Timing/Seasonal 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 Virginia WEA to the north)

# Consultations

- National Historic Preservation Act
- Endangered Species Act
- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (EFH)
- Coastal Zone Management Act
- Government to Government Tribal Consultations

# EA Findings

- If the EA finds that the proposed action will have significant impacts, BOEM will undertake preparation of an EIS
- If the EA results in a FONSI, BOEM may issue commercial wind leases

# Environmental Studies Program

- Conducts studies that fill data gaps and inform BOEM environmental documents and decision makers
- BOEM is partnering with UNC-Chapel Hill and NOAA on studies offshore NC
  - Identify fishing grounds and access routes in call areas
  - Identify hard bottom habitat, artificial reefs, and archeological sites in Call area  
Wilmington-East



# Submitting Comments in Response to the 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 Due January 28

- The NOI is available online at:

<http://www.boem.gov/Renewable-Energy-Program/State-Activities/North-Carolina.aspx>

- You may submit comments to [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). For “Enter Keyword or ID,” enter BOEM-2012-0090. 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  
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management  
381 Elden Street, HM 1328  
Herndon, Virginia 20170

# Questions?



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