

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: Ongoing Studies

Region: Atlantic

Planning Area(s): North, Mid-, South Atlantic

Title: Offshore Wind Energy Development Site Assessment and Characterization: Evaluation of the Current Status and European Experience

BOEM Cost: \$ 259,649

Period of Performance: FY 2012-2013

Conducting Organization(s): ESS Group, Inc.

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Description:

Background: The Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA), as amended by the Energy Policy Act of 2005, and supporting regulations necessitate the collection of information needed to assess, reduce, or avoid impacts from activities authorized by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM). Among the potential renewable energy technologies that may be developed on the outer continental shelf, wind energy is by far the closest to commercial production with one project already approved on the east coast. Development of wind energy facilities requires basic assessments of proposed sites including conflicts with other human uses (e.g. transportation, commercial and recreational fishing, military), geological and geophysical characteristics, cultural resources, and uses by biological resources (e.g. birds, bats, fish, marine mammals, turtles and their habitats). BOEM is in the process of collecting some of the foundational information and has proposed some guidelines for the collection of information. In addition, European countries have aggressively pursued offshore wind development and several commercial facilities are already in operation.

Orderly development of the offshore wind industry requires some surety of requirements, which can best be addressed through clear communication of the requirements and expectations of how they will be fulfilled. This, in turn, requires clear documentation of information needs as well as why the information is needed or how it will be used. Several efforts are underway to develop guidelines and protocols to address the critical information needs and provide guidance for industry about methodologies for site characterization to be included in submitted plans. These efforts are nearing completion and a workshop to present the outcomes is on the horizon. While some of these efforts examined activities in Europe, it would also be beneficial to incorporate face-to-face discussions with European experts about experiences, requirements, and regulations related to site evaluations, both before and after construction, from offshore wind development.

Objectives: The workshop will bring together experts from Federal, State, and industry groups to discuss information needs and requirements regarding site assessment and characterization with the goal of further developing clear requirements for offshore wind development.

Importance to BOEM: The launching of the Secretary's "Smart from the Start" wind energy initiative for the Atlantic OCS is aimed at facilitating the prioritization, rapid siting and leasing of new projects. This workshop will assist BOEM in the environmental review of WEAs and in the evaluation of sites for new offshore projects. Participation is expected from other Federal Agencies based on existing MOU's, regulatory requirements and leveraging partnerships to identify data needs and reduce overlap. This workshop will be attended by international experts and project leaders that will report on current and relevant studies, regulations, and oversight activities for site evaluation and characterization.

Current Status: The workshop was held on February 26-28, 2013 and the proceedings are scheduled for publishing in July.

Final Report Due: July 30, 2013

Publications: None.

Affiliated Web Sites: <http://www.boemwindworkshop2.com/>

Revised Date: May 1, 2013

ESPIS: Environmental Studies Program Information System

All *completed* ESP studies can be found here:

http://www.data.boem.gov/homepg/data_center/other/espis/espisfront.asp