



THE CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION AND OFFSHORE WIND

What is happening with offshore wind in California?

California is an international leader in mitigating the impacts of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and expanding the use of renewable energy. The state has a goal to achieve carbon neutrality no later than 2045 (Exec. Order No. B-55-18) and is taking bold action to roughly triple its current electric power capacity to meet this target. In August 2022, the California Energy Commission approved an [offshore wind strategic plan](#) with ambitious goals for 2030 and 2045. The conversion to clean energy resources and growing electricity demand are projected to increase California's offshore wind resource from 0 Gigawatts to 10 Gigawatts by 2045. Careful planning, comprehensive analysis of potential impacts, and a commitment to environmental monitoring and adaptive management are central to ensuring coastal resource protection while also expanding the state's renewable energy portfolio. In the coming years, California is expected to receive multiple wind development proposals in designated Wind Energy Areas (WEAs) off Humboldt and Morro Bay, with the possibility of more designations and associated project proposals in the future. Most of the offshore wind development contemplated in California will be in federal offshore waters, where the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is the lead agency for leasing and project approval.

What is the Commission's role?

For projects in federal waters, the Commission has two opportunities to weigh in on offshore wind through its [federal consistency](#) and state regulatory process. The first occurs prior to a BOEM lease sale. At this stage, the Commission assesses whether the leasing process, including any reasonably foreseeable development within a proposed lease area, is consistent with [Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act](#). The second opportunity occurs after specific projects are proposed. Here, the Commission reviews the specific development proposed and must issue both a coastal development permit for project components in the Commission's direct jurisdiction (i.e., state waters and some onshore areas) and a consistency certification for project components in federal waters.

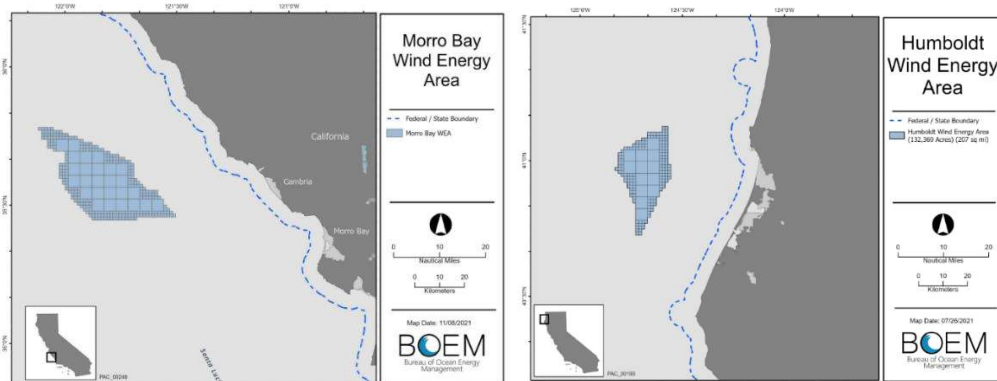
What issues and impacts are part of the Commission's review?

Offshore wind development must be planned and implemented in a manner that protects coastal resources. In reviewing leasing or specific projects, the Commission will assess impacts that floating offshore wind may have on the following:

- Marine Resources and Water Quality
- Commercial and Recreational Fishing
- Coastal Hazards
- Scenic and Visual Resources
- Public Access and Recreation
- Tribal and Cultural Resources
- Environmental Justice Communities



Diagram of offshore wind turbine structures. Current wind energy areas would utilize floating technology - either tension leg platform, semi-submersible, or spar. Source: Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement



Wind Energy Areas (WEAs)

One of the first steps in planning for offshore wind through the BOEM process is the identification of WEAs. BOEM has already designated two WEAs in California, one off the coast of Humboldt Bay and another off the coast of Morro Bay, comprising a total of 582 square miles of ocean. The Commission conducted a federal consistency review of both areas. On April 7, 2022, Commissioners conditionally concurred on the [consistency determination](#) for the Humboldt Bay area. On June 8, 2022, Commissioners conditionally concurred on the [consistency determination](#) for Morro Bay. BOEM agreed to several conditions, including to ensure coordination on survey and monitoring plans, minimize impacts to marine habitats, and engage with Tribal, fishing, and environmental justice communities, to ensure consistency with the Coastal Act. It is anticipated that BOEM will release final sale notices for both sites by the end of 2022, which will result in the sale of the WEAs to private developers (see next steps below).

Next Steps

Once leases within the two WEAs are awarded, lessees must submit survey plans describing data collection efforts the lessees will undertake to characterize their lease area. Developers then have up to 5 years to conduct these surveys. Information collected is then used by lessees to draft a construction and operation plan (COP). Once a project receives all the necessary local, state, and federal authorizations, including a consistency certification and CDP from the Commission, the project can begin construction.

Interagency Coordination

The Commission collaborates with a multitude of local, state, and federal agencies on planning and regulatory review of offshore wind in California. State agency partners such as the California Energy Commission, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the California Ocean Protection Council, and federal agency partners such as BOEM and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) have been critical in helping the Commission fulfill its role in planning and regulatory review of offshore wind. In addition, the Commission has begun coordinating with the Coastal Zone Management agencies within the states of Oregon and Washington to explore challenges and opportunities offshore wind brings to the West Coast region.

Want to learn more?

Read more about our federal consistency unit [here](#). For questions, contact Kate Huckelbridge, Senior Deputy Director, at Kate.Huckelbridge@coastal.ca.gov

