

TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

To: Council Members AGENDA ITEM 4B5

From: Staff

Date: May 18, 2018 Council Meeting

Subject: Offshore Renewable Energy Leasing Request for Public Feedback

Introduction

At its December 8, 2017 meeting, Council adopted Resolution 17-05 opposing offshore oil exploration, drilling, and seismic testing in the southeast Atlantic Ocean; and encouraging alternatives to new offshore drilling projects, such as offshore wind energy and ocean current energy projects to increase the proportion of electricity produced from renewable resources. That resolution was submitted to the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), the U.S. Congressional delegation from Florida, the Florida Legislature, and the Governor. BOEM is responsible for advancing the responsible development of offshore energy and marine mineral resources covering over 1.7 billion acres of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). The purpose of this item is to provide Council with information regarding BOEM's current request for public feedback on a "path forward" for future offshore wind energy development on the Atlantic OCS.

Background and Analysis

A key aspect of implementing President Donald J. Trump's America-First Offshore Energy Strategy is the initiation of a new National OCS Program development process, outlined in Executive Order (E.O.) 13795 of April 28, 2017; and Secretary Order 3350 of May 1, 2017, issued by Secretary of the Interior Ryan K. Zinke. Section 2 of E.O. 13795 states that it is United States policy to encourage energy exploration and production to maintain the nation's global energy leadership and "foster energy security and resilience for the benefit of the American people, while ensuring that any such activity is safe and environmentally responsible."

BOEM is currently conducting a high-level assessment of all waters offshore the United States Atlantic Coast for potential future offshore wind lease locations. BOEM has already awarded 13 leases of approximately 17 gigawatts (GW) of capacity in offshore wind energy leases off every state from Cape Hatteras in North Carolina to Cape Cod in Massachusetts, and has received requests from state and industry stakeholders requesting that additional lease areas be proposed.

On April 6, 2018, BOEM published a request for feedback on development of a path forward for future renewable energy leasing offshore on the Atlantic OCS in the National Register. BOEM states this process will begin a public conversation regarding their approach to future renewable energy leasing on the Atlantic OCS. BOEM believes additional areas of the Atlantic may be viable for responsible and informed commercial wind development, and is seeking specific input from stakeholders regarding the identification of forecast areas (areas that have the highest probability for wind energy development). Additionally, BOEM is requesting that developers identify areas along the Atlantic Coast that may be of interest for future offshore wind leasing.

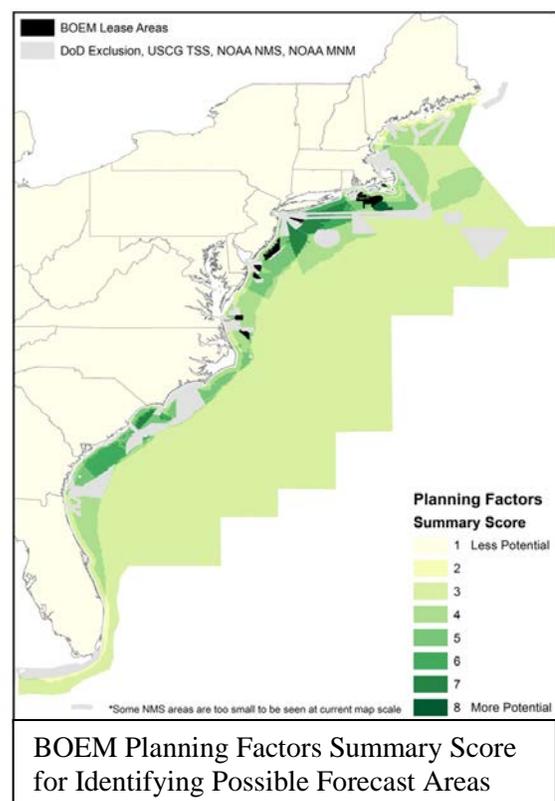
BOEM is seeking input on all aspects of their proposed path forward, in particular the merits of the factors listed below and whether there are other factors that should be considered at this preliminary stage. Proposed Factors for identification of offshore wind forecast areas include:

Exclusionary Factors: BOEM considers these “no-go” areas for offshore wind.

- Areas prohibited by the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act for leasing.
- Department of Defense conflict areas.
- Charted marine vessel traffic routes.

Positive Factors: BOEM will use these factors to identify forecast areas. The greater number of positive factors for a location, the greater likelihood that location will fall into a forecast area.

- Areas not previously removed.
- Areas greater than 10 nautical miles (nm) from shore.
- Areas shallower than 60 meters (m) in depth.
- Areas adjacent to states with offshore wind economic incentives.
- Areas adjacent to states with an interest in identifying additional lease areas.
- Areas where industry has expressed interest.



BOEM has indicated this public outreach effort will not replace their current area identification process that is more narrowly focused on specifically bounded offshore areas, utilizing extensive analysis of site-specific conditions (e.g., fisheries, navigation, seafloor conditions, etc.).

Conclusion

Offshore wind energy, ocean current, and hydrothermal energy projects are needed to increase the proportion of electricity produced from renewable resources. The use of these renewable resources is preferred over the traditional burning of fossil fuels, because they do not result in

greenhouse gas emissions nor do they create the risk of accidents such as oil spills. Offshore wind energy production is also preferable to offshore oil drilling which could have negative effects on Florida's major economic engine, the tourism industry that relies on clean waters and healthy beaches. A continued effort to develop and commercially produce renewable energy is a sustainable strategy for the future welfare of our region, state, and country.

Although the cost of constructing offshore wind energy infrastructure is more expensive than building facilities onshore, the capital costs for offshore wind generation are rapidly decreasing. This is due in part to advancements in the technology of turbines and platforms, and increasing interest worldwide in the production of this type of renewable energy. Many states are aggressively moving to develop offshore wind projects. In our region and state, this could mean jobs not only in wind energy production, but in the production of the turbines, and installation and operation of offshore wind farms.

The development of renewable wind energy is consistent with the following goals and strategies contained in Council's Strategic Regional Policy Plan:

- **Regional Goal 3.6:** Diversification of the year-round economy and establishment of an economic climate that will allow the Region to compete effectively in the global economy.
- **Regional Goal 6.4:** Protection of beachfront and environmentally sensitive coastal and marine resources.
- **Regional Goal 6.5:** Protection of estuarine resources.
- **Strategy 3.3.1:** Maintain and improve existing features which are attributes to the attraction of tourists.
- **Strategy 3.6.1.4:** Support the development of clean industry clustering (e.g. aerospace, marine, aquaculture) at appropriate locations in the region, as identified by county and local economic/business development organizations.
- **Strategy 9.1.1:** Reduce the Region's reliance on fossil fuels.

Additionally, BOEM's consideration of wind energy development is consistent with the following strategies contained in Council's Energy Planning Guide:

- **Strategy 5.3:** Support state and federal incentives and initiatives to promote the use of solar and other renewable energy resources.
- **Strategy 5.5:** Support the use of renewable energy sources.
- **Strategy 9.1:** Support programs to attract companies that produce renewable resources and energy efficient products.

This type of energy production also supports Council's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Plan's objectives and actions to promote innovation and competitiveness to prepare the region for growth and success in the worldwide economy.

Recommendation:

Council should authorize staff to transmit the above comments to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the U.S. Congressional delegation from Florida, the Florida Legislature, and the Governor.