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Salazar Launches ‘Smart from the Start’ Initiative to Speed Offshore Wind Energy Devel...

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News Release

Salazar Launches ‘Smart from the Start’ Initiative to Speed Offshore Wind Energy Development off the Atlantic Coast

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BALTIMORE, MD -- Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today launched a ‘Smart from the Start’ wind energy initiative for the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf to facilitate siting, leasing and construction of new projects, spurring the rapid and responsible development of this abundant renewable resource.

“The Cape Wind lease is an historic milestone in America’s renewable energy future, but to fully harness the economic and energy benefits of our nation’s vast Atlantic wind potential we need to implement a smart permitting process that is efficient, thorough, and unburdened by needless red tape,” said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar.

“Our ‘Smart from the Start’ Initiative for Atlantic wind will allow us to identify priority Wind Energy Areas for potential development, improve our coordination with local, state, and federal partners, and accelerate the leasing process,” Salazar noted. “If we are wise with our planning, we can help build a robust and environmentally responsible offshore renewable energy program that creates jobs here at home.” The accelerated leasing process is being simplified through a regulatory change, enabling leases to be issued in 2011 and 2012.

“This coordinated initiative will help to capture the great potential that offshore wind power offers our country and our economy,” said Deputy Secretary David J. Hayes. “Smart planning and early environmental reviews will pay great dividends in spurring responsible renewable wind energy development.”

“This accelerated and focused approach to developing the nation’s Atlantic wind resources will encourage investment while ensuring projects are built in the right way and in the right places,” said Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE) Director Michael R. Bromwich.

Director Bromwich said BOEMRE is proposing a revision to its regulations that will simplify the leasing process for offshore wind in situations where there is only one qualified and interested developer. The revision eliminates a redundant and therefore unnecessary step, and will potentially save up to 6-12 months in the leasing process.

“We believe the regulatory change we are proposing, along with our efforts to identify priority Wind Energy Areas offshore, will result in a more efficient and coordinated permitting process for offshore wind,” said Bromwich.

Wind Energy Areas (WEA) are offshore locations that appear most suitable for wind energy development. Data would continue to be collected for these high priority areas to inform government and industry assessments and planning, allowing a more efficient process for permitting and siting responsible development.

Key aspects of the Atlantic Wind ‘Smart from the Start’ initiative are modeled on successful efforts that are helping to launch major solar energy projects on U.S. public lands in the West, including a ‘Smart from the Start’ approach that designated solar energy study areas, conducted early environmental reviews, and is coordinating state and federal permitting processes for large-scale solar projects.

Secretary Salazar today recognized Deputy Secretary David J. Hayes, Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals Wilma Lewis, and Director Bromwich for their leadership in developing the ‘Smart from the Start’ initiative. He also noted that Interior officials have been working with their Atlantic state partners to identify WEAs. The state-federal task forces set up in eight of these states are identifying areas with generally bountiful wind energy and relatively fewer potential environmental and use conflicts than other offshore areas. Salazar also established the Atlantic Offshore Wind Energy Consortium with 11 coastal state governors earlier this year.

Under the ‘Smart from the Start’ initiative, BOEMRE will work with state partners to identify WEAs off the coasts of a number of Atlantic states, including Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, Virginia, Rhode Island and Massachusetts within the next 60 days.

By January 2011, Requests for Interest and Calls for Information will be issued for these new WEAs to support lease sale environmental assessments. Maryland’s Request for Information has already been issued and those for New Jersey, Virginia, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts are being developed. Additional WEAs will be identified in 2011 for other Atlantic States, which may include areas offshore New York, Maine, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

BOEMRE will assist in developing site assessment data and evaluating potential WEA leasing. In January 2011, BOEMRE will initiate a NEPA environmental assessment to evaluate the potential impacts associated with site assessment activities in identified WEAs. In addition, there will be rapid and close coordination with other federal agencies to compile existing site assessment data.

If no significant impacts are identified in WEAs, BOEMRE would offer leases in these areas by the end of 2011/early 2012. Developers will still need appropriate and comprehensive site-specific NEPA review of individual projects. BOEMRE will work directly with project proponents to ensure that those reviews take place on aggressive schedules with frequent interagency communications and dedicated staff.

To address the need for transmission infrastructure to bring this offshore power ashore, BOEMRE will move forward aggressively, on a parallel track, to process applications to build offshore transmission lines. The identification of wind energy areas should assist the siting and feasibility reviews associated with potential offshore transmission lines.

This offshore wind initiative is the latest in a series of Administration actions to spur renewable energy development on the Outer Continental Shelf. In early 2009, Salazar expedited the long-delayed process for approving the final rules for offshore wind development, establishing a regulatory framework that encourages responsible development. He then established the Atlantic Wind Consortium and announced the creation of an offshore wind coordinating office to expedite Interior’s collaborative efforts with the states.

A factsheet on elements of the initiative is [HERE](#).

A factsheet on the Direct Final Rule is [HERE](#).

More information is available at: <http://www.boemre.gov/offshore/RenewableEnergy/index.htm>.

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