

**Statement of  
Amanda Lefton  
Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Before the  
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
May 13, 2021**

Chairman Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, and members of the Committee, I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss BOEM's role in developing America's energy resources on the Outer Continental Shelf, or OCS.

My name is Amanda Lefton, and I am the Director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM). I am honored to have assumed this role and the responsibility of guiding the Bureau as it fulfills its mission to develop America's offshore energy and mineral resources in an environmentally and economically sustainable way.

BOEM is positioned to play an important role in advancing the Biden-Harris Administration's comprehensive approach to transitioning to a clean energy future, fighting climate change, and creating good, well-paying jobs.

## **Background**

As part of tackling the climate crisis, the Administration is committed to advancing the Nation's transition to a clean energy future. During his first week in office, President Biden issued Executive Order 14008, "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad," which directed the Department of the Interior to review processes for renewable energy siting to increase renewable energy production. On March 29<sup>th</sup>, the White House held a forum, where the Secretaries of the Interior, Energy, Commerce, and Transportation; key State energy agencies; offshore wind developers; and labor representatives discussed key opportunities and challenges of expanding offshore wind. As part of this forum, the Departments of the Interior, Energy, and Commerce

committed to a target to deploy 30 gigawatts of offshore wind by 2030. Additionally, the Agencies announced a series of initiatives that collectively demonstrate an all-of-Government approach that will catalyze the offshore wind industry in the United States and support tens of thousands of jobs. To advance this critical agenda, I look forward to working with you to ensure our offshore renewable energy resources are developed efficiently, responsibly, and equitably, informed by proactive engagement with partners and stakeholders, while also creating good-paying American jobs.

## **Renewable Energy**

BOEM's delegated authority to manage renewable energy development on the OCS gives us a critical role in implementing the Administration's offshore wind plan. Leasing activities to date include eight (8) competitive lease sales to develop wind energy facilities that have generated over \$472 million in high bids. We now have seventeen (17) active, commercial-scale wind energy leases, including at least one off each State from Massachusetts to North Carolina. On these wind energy leases, BOEM has received fourteen (14) project development proposals submitted by industry. BOEM additionally has two research leases – one is a two-turbine wind demonstration project offshore Virginia, and the other is a lease to investigate potential marine hydrokinetic sources offshore Oregon.

Just this week, on May 11, 2021, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo announced approval of the construction and operation of the Vineyard Wind project — the first large-scale, offshore wind project in the United States. The 800-megawatt Vineyard Wind energy project will contribute to the Biden-Harris administration's goal of generating 30 gigawatts of energy from offshore wind by 2030.

On March 29th, the Department of the Interior announced that BOEM finalized the New York Bight Wind Energy Area, approximately 800,000 acres of shallow water between Long Island and the New Jersey coast. Subsequently BOEM published the Notices of Intent to prepare Environmental Impact Statements for Ocean Wind and Revolution Wind located offshore New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. An Environmental Impact Statement for South Fork

Wind is already underway. These advancements are the product of both BOEM's diligent work to evaluate environmental and multiple use considerations, and our robust engagement with industry, Tribal governments, a variety of partners and stakeholders, and State and local governments.

We anticipate continued interest and growth in renewable energy on the Outer Continental Shelf in the years to come.

### **Marine Minerals**

BOEM is the primary agency charged with managing OCS marine minerals, such as sand and gravel, and is responsible for leasing these resources. Marine minerals managed by BOEM have been used for four dozen completed coastal restoration projects and have restored 428 miles of shoreline in eight states. To date, our marine minerals program has largely focused on beach nourishment and coastal restoration projects. We are also examining the potential for the sustainable production of critical minerals on the OCS, which are used in transportation, construction, renewable energy and by the military. In partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey, BOEM is developing a National Offshore Critical Mineral Inventory that will identify the amount and location of critical OCS minerals and highlight areas that can be further evaluated. The success of the Marine Minerals Program depends on partnerships with other federal agencies, state, and local governments as well as regional planning bodies, industry, and the business community, academia, tribes, and the general public.

### **Oil and Gas**

Executive Order 14008 directs the Department of the Interior to pause new oil and natural gas leasing on public lands and offshore waters, to the extent consistent with applicable law, pending a comprehensive review of the Federal oil and gas program. This directive is limited to leasing; it does not impact production or plans or permit applications submitted under valid, existing leases; such applications continue to be reviewed and approved. The directive also does not

apply to private or State lands, or lands that the United States holds in trust or restricted status for Tribes or individual Indians.

The Executive Order provides an important opportunity to review our oil and gas program to ensure that it serves the American public and to restore balance on America's public lands and waters to benefit current and future generations. The order directs a focus on reducing climate pollution, delivering environmental justice, and creating family-supporting jobs. In undertaking this review, BOEM is considering whether royalties and other fiscal terms amount to a fair return for the American taxpayer, including accounting for the corresponding costs to the climate and environment, ensuring that our actions respect our government-to-government relationships with Tribal nations, and committing to the principles of environmental justice in our decision-making.

We expect to complete the review in a timely manner, but do not have an exact timeframe for completion. An interim report to describe the focus and next steps for the review will be released in early summer. Incorporated into and summarized in that report will be input received during a virtual forum on March 25, 2021, that included diverse perspectives from the oil and gas industry, Tribes, academia, labor unions, and equity and environmental organizations, as well as submission of over 100,000 pieces of written input from the public. In addition, we have met and continue to meet with governors, Tribes, members of Congress, and interested stakeholders.

### **Scientific Integrity**

In addition to Executive Order 14008, President Biden also issued Executive Order 13990, "Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis." Under the order, the Federal Government must be guided by the best science and must ensure the integrity of Federal decision-making. Additionally, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland recently issued Secretary's Order 3399, which provides guidance on how science should be used in decision-making and improve transparency and public engagement in the Department's decision-making process.

These orders signal a renewed focus on and respect for the importance and value science brings to government. Fortunately, BOEM has always relied on rigorous scientific research as a foundation for its decision-making. Since 1973, BOEM and its predecessors have funded more

than \$1 billion in scientific research. Using applied science to inform our policy decisions helps BOEM fulfill its mission to manage offshore energy and mineral resources in an environmentally and economically responsible manner.

To ensure that we are responsibly advancing projects in the OCS, BOEM will continue to rely on the best available science and to invest in critical analyses to ensure that offshore energy and minerals projects avoid or minimize impacts to the environment.

## **Conclusion**

As Secretary Haaland previously stated, we've put off the transition to clean energy for generations; now the offshore wind industry has the potential to create tens of thousands of good-paying, family-supporting jobs across the Nation by 2030. BOEM plays a vital role in advancing safe and responsible offshore energy development, and we are committed to active engagement with all stakeholders and partners, including the members of this Committee. I look forward to our continued work together and to answering your questions today.