

BOEM Approves Virginia's Offshore Wind Research Activities Plan

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As part of President Obama's [Climate Action Plan](#) to create American jobs, develop clean energy sources and cut carbon pollution, today the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) announced its approval of the first wind energy Research Activities Plan (RAP) for a facility to be located in U.S. federal waters.

Last year, BOEM awarded a research lease to the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) on the Outer Continental Shelf off the coast of Virginia. Today's action clears the way for the installation and operation of two 6-megawatt (MW) turbines and associated cabling to shore, pending final engineering review of the project. The electricity generated by these turbines could power 3,000 homes.

"The approval of Virginia's Research Activities Plan marks another important step in our mission to be the first state to install offshore wind turbines in federal waters off of Virginia's coast," said Governor Terry McAuliffe. "This research project is the gateway to commercial development of offshore wind which will help diversify our Commonwealth's energy mix and support our efforts to build a new Virginia economy."

The RAP was developed by DMME's operator, Virginia Electric and Power Company (dba Dominion Resources, Inc.), and describes the proposed construction, operation, maintenance, and eventual decommissioning of the Virginia Offshore Wind Technology Advancement Project (VOWTAP).

"Data collected under this research lease will help us better understand the wind potential, weather and other conditions relevant to generating power from wind offshore Virginia," said BOEM Director Abigail Ross Hopper. "It will also allow us to gain experience with new offshore renewable energy technology, which is not only valuable to Virginia and BOEM, but also to other government agencies, the offshore renewable energy industry, and other stakeholders."

In 2012 Dominion Resources, Inc., received a U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Offshore

Wind Demonstration Project Award and partnered with DMME and others to establish VOWTAP. The award, funded by the DOE, was made to enhance the deployment of stronger, more efficient offshore wind energy technologies - thereby helping to further lower costs and drive greater performance across the industry. This was also one of three projects to receive support from DOE in 2014 and 2015 for RAP development, including survey and deployment activities. To learn more about DOE's offshore wind program and these awards, click [here](#).

In February 2013, DMME submitted a research lease application to BOEM for the installation and operation of two 6-MW turbines and associated cabling to shore. BOEM determined there was no competitive interest in the area where the state agency proposed to conduct these activities and proceeded with the leasing process on a non-competitive basis. That decision cleared the way for DMME to submit a RAP for which BOEM prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) that was published in December 2014 for public comment.

Based on the comments received and results of environmental consultations, BOEM prepared a revised EA and issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in September 2015. With the FONSI and interagency coordination complete, BOEM has conditionally approved the RAP. The conditions of approval provide safety, physical, environmental and cultural protections beyond those mitigations and measures proposed by DMME in the RAP. DMME is required to submit for BOEM's review two additional reports detailing design, fabrication, and installation engineering details prior to actual construction.

More information about this project, including the research lease, revised EA, DMME's RAP, and BOEM's conditions of approval can be found here:

<http://www.boem.gov/VOWTAP/>.

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) promotes economic development, energy independence, and environmental protection through responsible, science-based management of offshore conventional and renewable energy development.