

Public Input Requested on Potential Impacts to Historic Priorities: Commercial Wind Lease Issuance and Site Characterization Activities on the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf

Thursday, October 20, 2011

On November 23, 2010, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced the “Smart from the Start” Atlantic wind energy initiative to accelerate the responsible development of wind energy on the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). This initiative calls for the identification of areas of the Atlantic OCS that appear most suitable for commercial wind energy activities, and the opening of these areas for leasing and detailed site assessment activities.

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) launched the first phase of this initiative through the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) in the *Federal Register* (76 FR 7226). The NOI identified areas of the OCS offshore the Mid-Atlantic States – New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia – that appeared to provide the most suitable opportunity for wind energy development, while presenting the fewest apparent user conflicts. These Wind Energy Areas (WEAs) were originally delineated in the NOI and later refined through extensive consultation with other Federal agencies and BOEM’s Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Forces. *See* Figure 1.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f), and the act’s implementing regulations (36 CFR 800), require federal agencies to consider the effects of their actions on historic properties and afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment. BOEM is currently conducting Section 106 review for the issuing of leases and approving site assessment activities in the WEAs offshore New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia. As part of this Section 106 review, BOEM has initiated the consultation process with state historic preservation officers, Tribal officials and others. BOEM is now reaching out to the general public for comment regarding the identification of historic properties or potential effects to historic properties. This information will allow BOEM to consider and document historic preservation concerns early in the Section 106 process and allow the agency to consider the views of the public in the decision making process. BOEM is also considering public comment received following the NOI and on the EA.

Specifically, BOEM has determined that the following activities in these WEAs constitute an undertaking subject to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act:

- (1) Lease issuance (including reasonably foreseeable consequences associated with shallow hazards, geological, geotechnical, and archaeological resource surveys); and,
- (2) Approval of a Site Assessment Plan (SAP) (including reasonably foreseeable consequences associated with the installation and operation of a meteorological tower and/or meteorological buoys).

Please note that any leases that may be issued will not authorize construction or operations of commercial wind energy projects; specific proposed projects will undergo appropriate

environmental review and analysis, and a separate Section 106 review, with additional opportunities for public comment.

On July 12, 2011, BOEM published the *Commercial Wind Lease Issuance and Site Characterization Activities on the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf Offshore New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia - Draft Environmental Assessment* which contains information regarding the WEAs. The full text of the draft EA can be obtained at: http://www.boemre.gov/offshore/RenewableEnergy/PDFs/MidAtlanticWEAs_DraftEA.pdf.

Comments on the proposed undertaking as it pertains to historic properties should be submitted to BOEM by November 3, 2011. Written comments may also be delivered by hand or by mail, enclosed in an envelope labeled “Mid-Atlantic Section 106 Consultation” to Program Manager, Office of Renewable Energy (HM 1328), Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, 381 Elden Street, Herndon, Virginia 20170-4817.

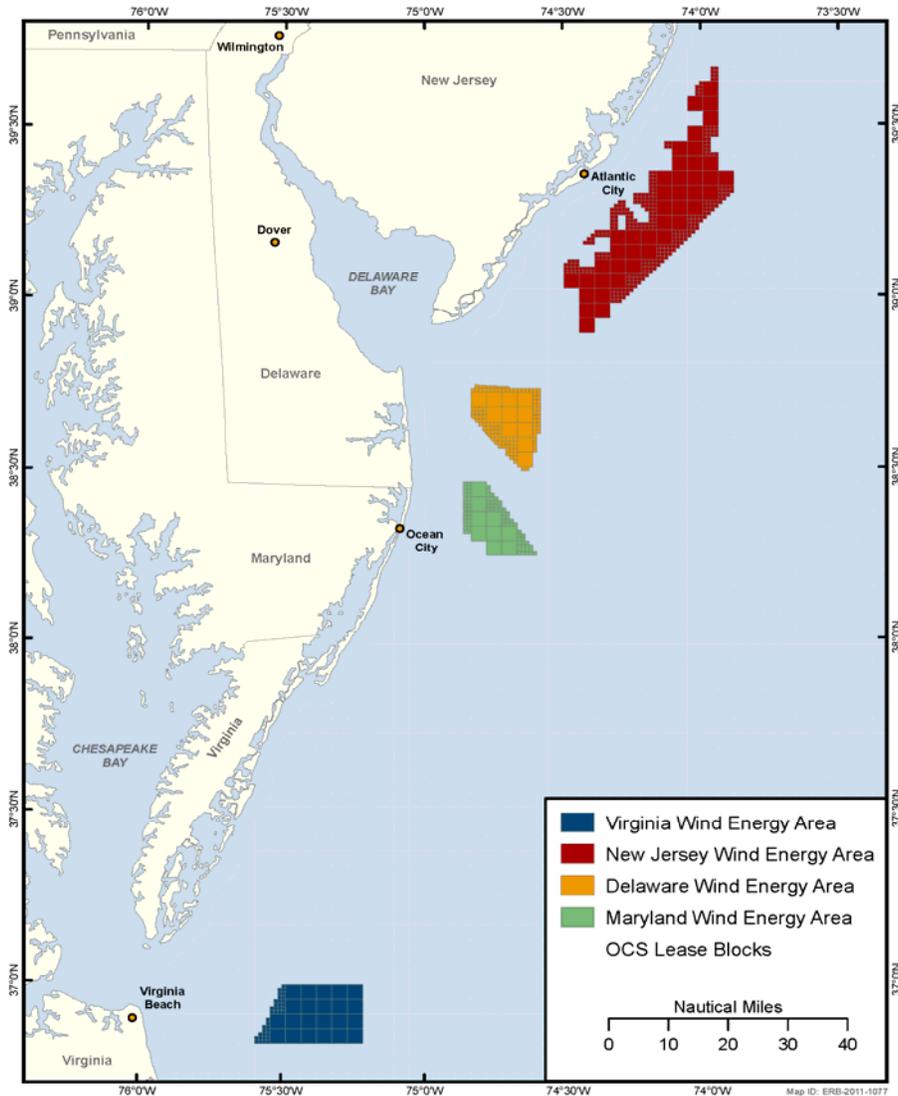


Figure 1