

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 26, 2020

The Honorable David Bernhardt
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Bernhardt:

As Members of the New York congressional delegation, we are excited by the economic opportunity for offshore wind energy development in federal waters off our state's coastline. To accelerate the advancement of this potential, we urge the Department of Interior (DOI) to designate final Wind Energy Areas (WEAs) in the New York Bight and, following this action, hold new lease auctions before the end of 2020.

With a commitment to develop 9,000 megawatts (MW) of offshore wind power by 2035, New York State is helping to move the nascent American offshore wind energy industry forward. These 9,000 MW will help power up to six million homes – providing affordable, reliable, and environmentally friendly electricity while also channeling millions of dollars into port investment and creating thousands of good-paying jobs.

There are currently three contracted offshore wind projects that will help New York meet its goal of 9,000 MW by 2035. The Sunrise Wind Project (880 MW), Empire Wind Project (816 MW), and South Fork Wind Farm (130 MW). Together, these three projects amount to 1,826 MW of electric generating capacity, but there is more work ahead to reach New York's 9,000 MW by 2035 standard.

In 2018, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) took an early step towards identifying additional areas in the New York Bight that are suitable for offshore wind development by releasing draft WEAs. The next phase should be an announcement of final WEAs to identify the best areas for offshore wind development so that BOEM can subsequently hold lease auctions for developers to bid on the right to apply for federal permits to realize wind projects in these designated areas.

In November 2018, BOEM indicated that it planned to announce final WEAs in early 2019 and hold the lease sale in early 2020 during the Intergovernmental Renewable Energy Task Force

Meeting on the New York Bight.¹ BOEM reaffirmed this goal in a June 11, 2019 “Path Forward” message which indicated lease areas would be identified in the New York Bight “later this year.”² And yet, now a year and a half later, we are still waiting for final WEAs to be issued. We urge DOI to direct BOEM to finalize these WEAs, which would enable the leasing process to move forward and provide significant revenue for the U.S. Treasury. It is projected that the federal government will receive \$447 million in revenue in Fiscal Year 2021 from lease sales, and a large portion of that is expected to come from the New York Bight.³ In order to produce these federal revenues, BOEM should not delay the WEA designation any longer.

As the country recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that we make smart investments to help our communities and economy recover quickly. By investing in the untapped potential of wind energy off the coast of Long Island, BOEM can play a significant role in paving our nation’s path to recovery. The tools, talent, and authorities granted to BOEM exist today to meet the critical mission ahead and should be deployed in earnest to meet this incredible opportunity and expedite our economic recovery.

We urge DOI to move the designation process forward by issuing final WEAs for the NY Bight as soon as possible, followed by immediately advancing to a competitive leasing auction. We ask that you give our request your full and fair consideration, consistent with applicable statutes and regulations.

Sincerely,



Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress (NY-04)



Tom Reed
Member of Congress (NY-23)



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress (NY-03)



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress (NY-10)

CC:

Dr. Walter Cruickshank, Acting Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

¹ <https://www.boem.gov/sites/default/files/renewable-energy-program/State-Activities/NY/NY-Bight-Nov-28-summary.pdf>

² <https://www.boem.gov/newsroom/notes-stakeholders/message-boems-acting-director-path-forward-offshore-wind-leasing-outer>

³ BOEM Budget Justifications and Performance Information Fiscal Year 2021, Table 9: Offshore Renewable Energy Receipt Estimates MLR-16 and personal conversations with Congressional Research Service.



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