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Contacts: Kari Martin or Cindy Zipf, 732-872-0111

CLEAN OCEAN ACTION STATEMENT

OUR OCEAN AUCTIONED...GOING, GOING, GONE! BOEM Auctions Half Million Acres of Public Ocean in NY/NJ Bight for Full-Scale, Private Offshore Wind Industrialization

A half million acres off NY/NJ was auctioned today, February 23, by the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and leased to and privatized by Big Energy for massive offshore wind industrialization. It is the largest offshore wind sale in US history, and too much, too fast.

Added to 425,000 acres already leased off NJ, this totals nearly one million acres of industrial development for offshore wind. That is nearly FIVE times the size of all five boroughs of NYC.

“The ocean is far more valuable as an ecosystem, so we must minimize industrialization and be sure it is protective of marine life,” said Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action.

Clean Ocean Action (COA) had urged the Biden Administration to slow down and be more reasonable and responsible for planning this new renewable energy industrial revolution. Unfortunately, a rational approach was ignored, and the fast tracking of offshore wind puts marine life and a clean ocean economy at risk. COA supports responsible and reasonable offshore wind energy, but this is a reckless privatization, and will not ensure protection of marine life including whales, dolphins, turtles and the hundreds of other species that call the ocean home.

There are unanswered questions with this newly proposed industry, especially at the magnitude, scale, and speed of development currently proposed. COA maintains that the leasing of these half million acres is too premature given the current gaps in scientific literature concerning the impacts of offshore wind turbines and related infrastructure on marine species and their habitats. While BOEM will still need to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement after the leases have been awarded to analyze the specific environmental consequences of any proposed project, we should learn from the existing leases encompassing 425,000 acres that are already in the works before selling-off another nearly 500,000 acres of public ocean lands and waters.

This massive industrialization of this essential ocean realm is larger than anywhere in the US waters: there are already at least 550 wind turbines proposed in the NY/NJ Bight, not including those that would result from the 488,201 acres leased today, and these turbines will be significantly larger than any other turbines in operation in the world. Offshore wind development is neither clean nor harmless; it results in significant heat, pollution, and ecological impacts, as well as many other consequences that are not even understood yet.

Rather than focusing on faster, cheaper, safer, better green energy solutions, the region is racing to sell-off large scale areas of the ocean to major industrial developers, including Big Oil. Many of the companies vying for a large swath of the ocean for profit are fossil fuel companies.

The commitments to offshore wind energy made by BOEM, as well as the Governors of New York and New Jersey, selectively makes commitments to “ocean users” and tribal interests, but wholly ignores the most at-risk populations: *marine life*. This industrial fast-tracked approach is not transparent, responsible, or reasonable.

COA supports pilot-scale projects to help resolve the uncertainty that remains about the marine impacts of offshore wind, thereby ensuring that the very ecosystem which has buffered the impacts of climate change is not destroyed and that the very soul of this region’s economy, the clean ocean economy, continues to have the support it needs to thrive. Likewise, there must be FULL DISCLOSURE of all the onshore impacts of offshore wind energy development too. COA remains deeply disappointed that there is not an equal or greater rush to build-up onshore renewable energy, such as solar and wind, as they are able to come online faster and allow for direct use.

The ocean has already buffered climate impacts, but to her own demise with sea-level rise and ocean acidification. A healthy ocean is key to helping reduce impacts from climate change. However, this lease sale and the current fast-tracked scope and scale of offshore wind energy development off the NY/NJ coast are neither reasonable nor responsible given all the unknowns. This industrialization and privatization is too much, too fast, and puts the ocean at risk.

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