

Interior Offers First Right-of-Way for Renewable Energy Transmission in Federal Waters

Historic Step Authorizes Transmission Line for Offshore Wind Energy from Block Island to Rhode Island Mainland

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – As part of President Obama’s [Climate Action Plan](#) to create American jobs, develop clean energy sources and cut carbon pollution, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Acting Director Walter Cruickshank today announced that BOEM has offered a right-of-way (ROW) grant to Deepwater Wind Block Island Transmission System, LLC (Deepwater Wind) for the Block Island Transmission System (BITS).

“This is a major milestone for offshore renewable energy in the United States,” said Secretary Jewell. “This decision marks the first right-of-way grant offered in federal waters for renewable energy transmission, paving the way for Block Island, the only Rhode Island community not connected to the grid, to have access to clean, affordable renewable energy. Today’s announcement is an exciting development for Block Island, but it also represents a big step in our nation’s sustainable energy future.”

Deepwater Wind’s proposed project would entail the installation of a bi-directional submerged transmission cable between Block Island and the Rhode Island mainland. The transmission system would serve two purposes: 1) connect Deepwater Wind’s proposed 30 megawatt (MW) Block Island Wind Farm, located in Rhode Island state waters about 2.5 nautical miles southeast of Block Island, to the Rhode Island mainland; and 2) transmit power from the existing onshore transmission grid on the mainland to Block Island. The ROW corridor,

which is about eight nautical miles long and 200 feet wide, comprises the portion of the transmission line that crosses federal waters.

“Today’s announcement builds on Interior’s work to stand up a sustainable offshore wind program for the Atlantic Coast,” said Cruickshank. “We look forward to working with Deepwater Wind to bring this this offshore infrastructure project to fruition.”

To date, BOEM has awarded seven commercial wind energy leases off the Atlantic coast: two noncompetitively issued leases (one for the proposed Cape Wind project in Nantucket Sound offshore Massachusetts and one offshore Delaware); and five competitively-issued leases (two offshore Rhode Island-Massachusetts, two offshore Maryland, and one offshore Virginia). The competitive lease sales generated about \$14 million in winning bids for more than 357,500 acres in federal waters. BOEM is expected to hold additional competitive auctions for Wind Energy Areas offshore Massachusetts and New Jersey in the coming year.

Efforts to spur responsible development of offshore wind energy are part of a series of Obama Administration actions to increase renewable energy both offshore and onshore by improving coordination with state, local and federal partners.

Since 2009, Interior has approved 52 wind, solar and geothermal utility-scale projects on public or tribal lands, including associated transmission corridors and infrastructure to connect to established power grids. When built, these projects could provide about 14,000 megawatts – enough energy to power nearly 4.8 million homes and support more than 20,000 construction and operations jobs.

Once both the agency and Deepwater Wind have agreed upon the terms and conditions of the grant, BOEM will send the grant to Deepwater Wind for execution, and the company will be required to pay the first year’s rent and provide financial assurance. Once executed, BOEM will finalize its review of Deepwater Wind’s General

Activities Plan, which describes proposed installation activities and conceptual decommissioning plans for the transmission system. The General Activities Plan would be the first approved for an offshore wind energy project for a transmission system in Federal waters.

The majority of the activities and permanent structures related to the Block Island Wind Farm will be sited in state waters and lands, making the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers the lead federal agency for analyzing the potential environmental effects of the project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As a portion of the proposed project would be located on the federally managed Outer Continental Shelf, the project must secure a ROW grant from BOEM before proceeding. BOEM has participated as a cooperating agency in the NEPA analysis and associated consultations led by the Corps.

In September 2014, the Corps completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Block Island Wind Farm and BITS, and issued a Finding of No Significant Impact. Before adopting the EA, BOEM conducted an independent review of the EA and determined that no reasonably foreseeable significant impacts are expected to occur as the result of the preferred alternative, or any of the alternatives contemplated by the EA. On October 27, 2014, BOEM issued a Finding of No Significant Impact for the issuance of a ROW grant, and approval of the General Activities Plan, with modifications.

For more information about this project, click [here](#).

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.