

Environmental Studies Program: Ongoing Study

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| Field | Study Information |
| Title | Social Values, Perceptions, and Likelihood of Social Action in Potential Wind Energy Areas in the Pacific Outer Continental Shelf Region (PC-22-06) |
| Administered by | Pacific OCS Regional Office |
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| Procurement Type(s) | Interagency Agreement |
| Conducting Organization(s) | NOAA National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) |
| Total BOEM Cost | \$399,500 |
| Performance Period | FY 2022 (Q4) – 2026 (Q1) |
| Final Report Due | October 18, 2025 |
| Date Revised | October 30, 2023 |
| Problem | As the potential for offshore wind energy development expands, there is a need to better understand what is important to potentially affected communities. Information is needed on how differing values and perceptions across and within communities influence local receptivity to proposed development. |
| Intervention | Although BOEM currently engages with stakeholders through public participatory processes such as public meetings and webinars, it can be difficult to identify the full set of stakeholders and determine and address their concerns. Spatially explicit data on seascape values, perceptions, and opinions needs to be collected to inform the planning process for offshore wind energy leasing in Federal waters in the Pacific. |
| Comparison | Identify factors predictive of support level and intention to take future action to advance a position on offshore wind energy. |
| Outcome | Predict which communities may be more or less receptive to offshore wind development. Document the relevance and importance of local contextual factors on the possible reception of proposed local offshore wind energy development among residents in affected coastal communities. This will include aspects such as place attachment, proximity, and perception of potential impacts. |
| Context | Oregon |

BOEM Information Need(s): To better understand and document meaningful social information related to coastal communities in Oregon to inform renewable energy projects to accomplish the following:

1. Meet BOEM's requirements for preparing environmental assessments under NEPA (can also be leveraged to inform OCSLA requirements)
2. Analyze environmental justice under Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address [Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income](#) Populations; address

requirements of [Executive Order 13985: Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#) (Jan 20, 2021)

3. [Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad](#)

As the potential for offshore wind energy development expands, there is a need to better understand what is important to potentially affected communities. Further, information is needed on how differing values and perceptions across and within communities influence local receptivity to proposed development. This study will help decision-makers better understand the relationships between how people use marine spaces, the type and intensity of seascape values, and the motivations of particular stakeholder groups to support or oppose offshore wind energy projects. The results of this study would help BOEM and developers understand and negotiate the cultural landscape of areas targeted for offshore wind energy projects.

Using an enhanced understanding of public perceptions, decision-makers could tailor outreach efforts for issues important to local communities. They could use the results to address perceptions of negative impacts by encouraging targeted public dialogue on those issues and offering information and applicable science (Gonyo et al. 2021; Goedeke et al. 2019).

- Social and environmental justice: due to the proposed study methodology, the perspectives from minority communities often underrepresented in political decision-making can be explicitly documented with relatively little burden to them.
- Climate change: as pressures from a changing climate heighten and the US shifts its energy production focus to forms of green energy, understanding the wider spectrum of American perceptions of offshore wind energy is now more important than ever.

Background: BOEM is currently engaged in offshore wind planning activities in Oregon. BOEM's focus is primarily on understanding wind energy potential, technical feasibility, and potential natural environment effects, such as impacts to fish, marine mammals, and birds. While visual simulations are sometimes incorporated to explore potential effects on the human environment, other potential concerns of coastal communities, including vulnerable populations, are often inadequately addressed. Outside of official public engagement forums, specific preferences relating to offshore wind energy development remain relatively unknown for members of the general public and other groups who may not perceive themselves as stakeholders. Failure to gain these perspectives regarding potential benefits or impacts of offshore wind energy development is problematic, particularly when relevant stakeholders emerge late to the planning process for local projects.

Results from the Carolina study (Gonyo et al. 2021; Goedeke et al. 2019) showed that those who attend BOEM stakeholder engagement efforts are likely not representative of the population as a whole. Findings from the proposed research would help BOEM identify different stakeholder groups and how to engage with them. Therefore, the proposed work would be complementary to BOEM's existing stakeholder engagement processes and not duplicative. It is especially important to get buy-in from these local communities to avoid potential conflicts that may complicate and delay projects. Therefore, spatially explicit data on seascape values, perceptions, and opinions needs to be collected to inform the planning process for offshore wind energy leasing in federal waters in the Pacific. This study is modeled after research previously conducted by NCCOS in the Carolina coast region (Goedeke et al. 2019).

Objective(s):

- Document the relevance and importance of local contextual factors on the possible reception of proposed local offshore wind energy development among residents in affected coastal communities. This will include, but not be limited to, aspects such as place attachment, proximity, and perception of potential impacts.
- Identify factors predictive of support level and intention to take future action to advance a position on offshore wind energy.
- Predict which communities may be more or less receptive to offshore wind development.

Methods: As with the previous Carolina study (Gonyo et al. 2021; Goedeke et al. 2019), this study would conceptualize Devine-Wright's (2009) framework of place change, which begins with awareness before transitioning through interpretation, evaluation, coping, and action. The cooperating agency would coordinate closely with BOEM on: overall timing and the timing and *strategy* for engagement; ensuring Region-specific content needs are addressed; and the timing, design and delivery of the survey to ensure results inform decision-making. A geographically stratified, random household survey will be conducted in a predefined coastal region of Oregon adjacent to potential offshore wind development areas. Residents 18 years of age and older will be invited to take a survey, consisting of questions on place attachment, recreational activities, social value of favorite places, awareness, perceived impact to important quality of life items, support level, past and future action, and demographic and household characteristics. A very large sample size is targeted. Weighted data will be analyzed. Logistic regression will be used to test hypotheses related to the conceptual model. Spatial data will be analyzed and visualized using ArcMap and ArcGIS Pro.

Specific Research Question(s): The survey will consist of questions on topics such as:

1. What are the demographics of stakeholders and their communities in areas potentially affected by offshore wind energy development?
2. What are the levels of awareness and perceptions of different stakeholder groups to offshore wind energy development?
3. How do stakeholders view the potential benefits and impacts of offshore wind energy development?
4. Which communities may favor or be opposed to offshore wind energy development? Which communities may be more or less likely to engage in social action for or against local wind energy development?

Current Status: The interagency agreement between BOEM and NOAA was awarded on July 18, 2022. The post-award meeting was held on August 29, 2022. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has approved NOAA's request to reinstate the previous offshore wind energy survey with revisions, and NOAA will submit a Federal Register Notice announcing the data collection. Research design meetings and focus groups were held and the survey instrument was revised accordingly, and subsequently approved by OMB as a non-substantive change request in June 2023. The data collection subcontract was awarded to the Social & Economic Sciences Research Center at Washington State University and the kickoff meeting was held on September 22, 2023.

Publications Completed: None

Affiliated WWW Sites: None

References:

- Devine-Wright P. 2009. Rethinking NIMBYism: the role of place attachment and place identity in explaining place-protective action. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*. 19:426–41.
- Goedeke TL, Gonyo SB, Loerzel J, Freitag A, Fleming CS, Ellis C. 2019. Resident perceptions of local offshore wind energy development: support level and intended action in Coastal North and South Carolina. 116 p. OCS Study BOEM 2019-054. Obligation No.: M15PG00022. https://espis.boem.gov/final%20reports/BOEM_2019-054.PDF
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- Kurtz HE. 2003. Scale frames and counter-scale frames: constructing the problem of environmental injustice. *Political geography*, 22(8), p.887-916.
- Walker G. 2009. Beyond distribution and proximity: exploring the multiple spatialities of environmental justice. *Antipode*, 41(4), p.614-636.