

# RECHARGE

January 12, 2022

## 'We are at an inflection point': US opens New York Bight to gigascale offshore wind build

American flag flies on the back of a boat in front of the Statue of Liberty on May 12, 2021 in New York City. (Photo by Gary Hershorn/Getty Images)



*First sector lease sale under Biden administrations – and biggest single tender yet – opens way to development of some 7GW of plant in waters off New Jersey and New York*

By **Tim Ferry**

The US will auction off over 480,00 acres (194 hectares) of prime offshore wind acreage off its eastern seaboard in the New York Bight with over 7GW of offshore wind capacity in what will be the first sector leasing under the Biden administration.

Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland joined New Jersey governor Phil Murphy, New York governor Kathy Hochul, and labor union leader Liz Shuleri in a conference call to announce the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), the government agency charged with managing industrial development in federal waters, would auction off six leases – the most ever offered in a single auction – on 23 February in the waters off New Jersey and New York.

“The Biden-Harris administration has made tackling the climate crisis a centrepiece of our agenda, and offshore wind opportunities like the New York Bight present a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fight climate change and create good-paying, union jobs in the US,” said Haaland. “We are at an inflection point for domestic offshore wind energy development. We must seize this moment – and we must do it together.”

The **long-anticipated lease auction** in the New York Bight sets off what the federal government promises to be a dynamic year in the US offshore wind sector and anticipates further lease sales of up to **1.6GW in the Wilmington East wind energy area (WEA)** off of the Carolinas, as well as auctions in the **Humboldt and Morro Bay WEA** in California totalling as much as 4GW, and possibly even in the Gulf of Mexico.

New Jersey and New York are leading the nation in their offshore wind plans, with over 16GW of offshore wind targeted between them by 2035, and both are making huge investments into supply chain and port infrastructure to keep pace with the burgeoning growth.

“Offshore wind holds the tremendous promise for our future in terms of climate change, economic growth, strengthening our work force, and job creation,” said New Jersey governor Phil Murphy. “[The state] is already committed to creating nearly one-quarter of the nation’s offshore wind generation market and these transformative projects are proof that climate action can drive investments in infrastructure and manufacturing, while creating good-paying, union jobs.”

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New Jersey has already commissioned over **4GW of offshore wind power** and **broke ground on a \$465m, 205-acre wind port** last September and has already received **bids from many of the major OEM turbine suppliers** and developers for manufacturing, installation, and staging capacity.

The state is also **spearheading planned transmission development** to ensure that the power can be brought to shore efficiently. “Increasing American offshore wind capacity to utility scale... heightens the need for planned transmission infrastructure, a critical component to efficiently deliver an abundance of offshore wind power to shore,” said Janice Fuller, president for the Mid-Atlantic at Anbaric, a developer of large-scale electric transmission and storage systems.

New York’s 9GW target by 2035 **leads the nation** and the state has already pre-qualified 11 ports around the state for manufacturing and staging, including the 35-acre (14ha) **Arthur Kill Marine Terminal**, as well as the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal and the upstate ports of **Coeymans, Albany**, and the greenfield NYS Offshore Wind Port.



“Here in New York, we are already living with the disastrous effects of climate change through extreme weather that pose a direct threat to our way of life,” said state governor Hochul. “We must chart an ambitious path toward a cleaner energy economy now more than ever, and today’s milestone further highlights New York’s commitment creating a greener tomorrow.”

Joe Van De Loo, chief executive of the new NYS Offshore Wind Port, told Recharge: “The auction adds momentum for the already significant developments for creating an offshore wind manufacturing hub in the New York capital region.”

“These six new lease areas will draw in new investors and developers to the US market and foster the competition that will catalyse major supply chain development regionally and nationally,” Liz Burdock, president and CEO of the Business Network for Offshore Wind, said in a statement.

The announcement follows the finding of **“no significant impact”** by BOEM’s environmental assessment released December, which enabled the lease auction to proceed. The New York Bight WEA is over 800,00 acres in total, but was pared down due to concerns from ocean stakeholders, including fisheries and coastal communities.

“The areas identified... were painstakingly developed through several years of rigorous analysis and engagement with the public,” said Fred Zalcman, director of the New York Offshore Wind Alliance. “The sale optimizes the productive use of the Northeast’s world-class wind resource, while still respecting the marine environment and migratory species, as well as the needs and interests of other ocean energy users.”

The New York Bight has long attracted offshore wind developers as a zone due to its relatively shallow 25-45 metre water depths, rich 8.5 metres per second wind speeds, and proximity to major electricity load centres.

“The New York Bight offshore wind lease sale... will be an incredible energy and economic opportunity,” National Ocean Industries Association president Erik Milito said in a statement. “With their large economies and massive populations, New York and New Jersey are two coastal states critical to the development of American offshore wind.”

The Biden administration is targeting a **“national goal”** of having 30GW of offshore wind capacity online by 2030 and BOEM has ramped up its permitting approvals to reach that objective.

“New efforts to improve inter-agency coordination and prioritize the review of renewable energy projects located on public lands will ensure the American people benefit from the best solar and wind resources this country has to offer,” said Gregory Whetstone, president and CEO of the American Council on Renewable Energy, a renewable energy advocacy group.

The Department of Interior has set a goal of having **12.5GW of offshore wind** online by 2025. A **report by American Clean Power** released recently forecasts between 23GW and 40GW of offshore wind capacity spurring \$120bn in economic investment resulting from development of these proposed areas.