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SLO County has \$1.75 million to spend preparing for offshore wind. How will it use it?

The federal government wants to open 399 square miles of the Pacific Ocean along California's Central Coast to floating offshore wind turbine development. The Tribune will hold a Live Q&A with a panel of experts to discuss this issue. BY THE TRIBUNE

BY **STEPHANIE ZAPPELLI**

San Luis Obispo County has plans to spend more than [\\$1 million in state grants to prepare for offshore wind development](#) — even though the county has no authority over offshore wind-related projects themselves, according to acting county administrative officer Rebecca Campbell.

Still, the funding will help the county engage with future offshore wind development, she said. “We want to ensure that we have a seat at the table so we can look out for our stakeholders and community,” Campbell said at the [San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors](#) meeting Tuesday.

In June, the U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management issued leases to three companies expected to [build massive floating wind farms](#) about 20 miles off the coast of San Luis Obispo County in a 376-square-mile area of the Pacific Ocean known as the Morro Bay wind energy area. Federal and state agencies are responsible for regulating the wind farms and infrastructure that supports them, according to Campbell.

The Board of Supervisors and local governments can submit comments on the projects — but will not have the authority to approve or deny the projects themselves, Campbell said. During the past two years, the state issued two grants to the county to prepare for offshore wind development. Here's a look at how the county plans to spend those funds.

The wind turbines planned off the San Luis Obispo County coast would be similar to Ocean Wind's WindFloat Atlantic floating offshore wind energy project near Portugal. They are each about 688 feet tall, or about twice the height of the Statue of Liberty. *Courtesy of Ocean Winds*

STATE GRANTS TO HELP SLO COUNTY PREPARE FOR OFFSHORE WIND

In 2022, the state gave the county a \$1 million grant to study potential locations and opportunities for infrastructure that would support the three offshore wind farms proposed near Morro Bay.

Part of the grant will be allocated to a technical study that analyzes the potential for operation and maintenance facilities in Morro Bay, Port San Luis and at the Cal Poly Pier in Avila Beach, said Susan Strachan, San Luis Obispo County Planning and Building Department's power plant decommissioning manager.

These facilities could include warehouses, offices, storage yards and berths for service operation vessels and crew transfer vessels that support the offshore wind farms, according to Strachan. “The idea of this study is to get into more detail about specifically what could go where,” Strachan told The Tribune on Wednesday. “It's the beginning of a very, very long process.”

On Feb. 23, Morro Bay, Port San Luis and Cal Poly submitted reports to the county explaining what they want to see in the study, according to Strachan. As of Wednesday, the county was still reviewing the reports and determining the scope and cost of the study, Strachan said.

The rest of the grant will fund staff in Morro Bay, Port San Luis and at the Cal Poly Pier whose jobs would be to work with the consultant managing the study, according to Strachan. The county has not decided whether or not it will give the money directly to each agency, or if it will hire staff another way, she said. The county must commit the funds by June 30 of this year and spend them by June 30, 2026. This isn't the only grant the county won for offshore wind.

In 2023, the [California Natural Resources Agency](#) gave the county \$750,000 to allocate toward staffing to keep up with the state's offshore wind goals. Some of this funding will also be allocated to Morro Bay, Port San Luis and the Cal Poly Pier to hire staff for community engagement, according to Strachan.

Floating offshore wind along the Central Coast

A quick primer on what may be coming to our ocean

