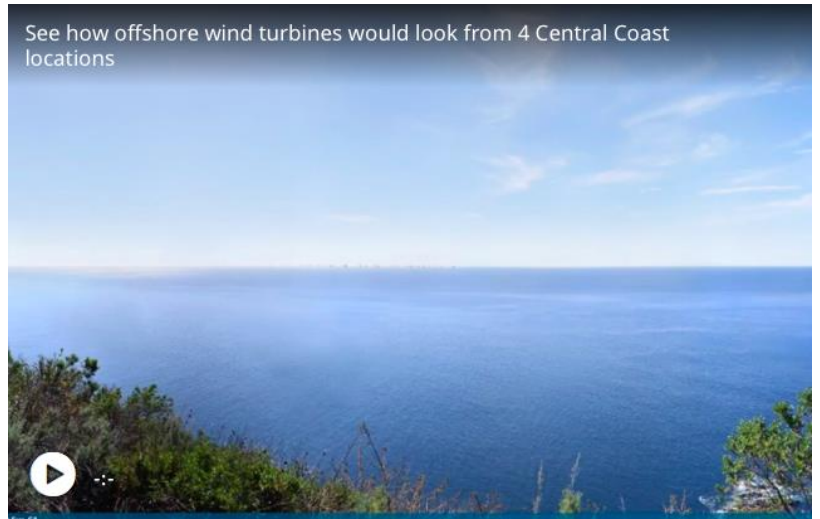


The Sacramento Bee

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How much offshore wind energy is coming to California? Gov. Newsom signs law to find out

A new proposal for a wind farm off the coast of San Luis Obispo County would move turbines 15 to 20 miles offshore rather than 30. Here's a look at how the turbines would appear from four coastal locations. BY BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT



By Mackenzie Shuman

Offshore wind is no longer a distant possibility in California. Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a bill into law on Thursday mandating that the California Energy Commission create a plan for offshore wind development in federal waters.

“Offshore wind power is one step closer to finding a home on the Central Coast and making us the nation’s clean energy capital,” said Assemblymember Jordan Cunningham, R-San Luis Obispo, an author of AB 525. “Offshore wind is a win-win-win. It means more renewable power generated locally, more local jobs and more local tax revenue.”

Sen. John Laird, D-Santa Cruz, who co-authored the bill, said he was “thrilled” that Newsom signed the bill. The bill “is not only critical in combating climate change, it also means more jobs for the residents of my district,” Laird said in a statement on Thursday. “The timing is also terrific — offshore wind will help mitigate the impacts of the closure of the Diablo Canyon Power Plant and work in concert with the long-term battery storage proposal in Morro Bay. It’s a big day for the Central Coast and I and look forward to continued collaboration on a greener future.”

The new law, which goes into effect Jan. 1, 2022, gives the Energy Commission three deadlines: First, the Energy Commission must figure out and establish what the maximum feasible capacity is for floating wind turbines off the coast of California in federal waters by June 1, 2022, according to the bill. The bill then requires the Energy Commission to submit to the Natural Resources Agency and other entities a “preliminary assessment of the economic benefits of offshore wind” by Dec. 31, 2022.

And finally, the Energy Commission must identify and plan for how much offshore wind power would be developed by the target years of 2030 and 2045, where the wind turbines would be built, port infrastructure needs to support the development, necessary electricity transmission and grid upgrades, and potential impacts to coastal resources, fisheries, Native American and indigenous people and the military.

That plan must be submitted to the California Natural Resources Agency and the California State Legislature by June 30, 2023, according to the bill. The Energy Commission must coordinate with the California Coastal Commission, Ocean Protection Council, the Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development, the Department of Fish and Wildlife and other federal, state and local agencies to develop the capacity determination, economic assessment and plan, according to the bill.

“Today’s bill signing is yet another demonstration of Governor Newsom’s commitment to realizing the opportunities that offshore wind can bring to our state,” Energy Commissioner Karen Douglas said in a statement. “The Energy Commission and its state agency partners are looking forward to continuing this important work together and with stakeholders to develop a strategic plan for offshore wind in federal waters off the California coast.”

The bill was introduced in February by Cunningham and fellow Assembly members David Chiu, D-San Francisco; and Laura Friedman, D-Glendale. AB 525 was co-authored by a bipartisan group of 13 other Assembly members and eight California senators, including Laird. “We don’t have that many opportunities to work on matters that will have an impact long after we’re gone, but this is one of them,” Chiu said in a prepared statement Thursday. “The effects of the climate crisis are all around us. With offshore wind, we can counter the threat of climate change, meet our clean energy goals and create thousands of new good-paying jobs in the process.”

The area outlined in red shows the 399-square-mile Morro Bay call area in which floating wind turbines could be built. Courtesy of the California Offshore Wind Energy Gateway.



On Sept. 9, the bill was [overwhelmingly passed](#) by the Assembly and Senate. “AB 525 is a major victory for the Central Coast’s economic transition,” Cunningham said in a statement about the governor signing the bill into law. “I could not be more proud of our community as we prepare for the future.”

It’s unknown how much offshore wind energy power the Energy Commission will plan for.

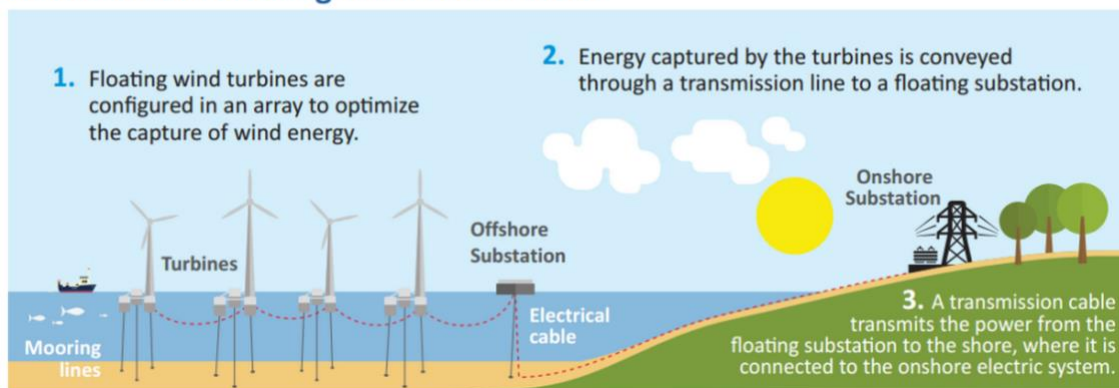
The bill, which went through several amendments before it made its way to Newsom’s desk, [originally](#) required the Energy Commission to develop a plan for at least 10 gigawatts of offshore wind energy to be installed off the coast by 2040, with an interim target of three gigawatts by 2030. The 10 gigawatts of energy would have supplied nearly 7% of the 145 gigawatts needed to achieve California’s mandated goal of 100% carbon-free electricity by 2045.

OFFSHORE WIND DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS ALREADY UNDERGOING REVIEW

Two major California offshore wind turbine developments are already in the works. A 1.5-gigawatt offshore wind energy development is under environmental review off the coast of Humboldt County in Northern California. And 3 gigawatts of offshore wind energy is likely coming to the “Morro Bay call area” off the Central Coast, about 17 to 40 miles west of San Simeon and Cambria. Those gigawatt figures represent what each wind farm could potentially produce at maximum capacity. On unusually calm days, however, zero electricity could be produced.

Energy captured by offshore wind turbines on the Central Coast would be transmitted by cable to shore, where it could connect to California’s grid through either the Morro Bay Power Plant or Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant, which is scheduled to close in 2025. Floating turbines would be connected by cables and anchored to the ocean floor. U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

How Offshore Floating Wind Farms Work



[Several energy companies have expressed interest](#) in developing a floating wind farm in the 399-square-mile Morro Bay call area. Those include Castle Wind, Ocean Winds, Shell, BP and Aker Offshore Wind.

The Bureau for Ocean Energy Management, the federal agency charged with overseeing and issuing leases for wind farms in federal waters, will soon begin an environmental review process to evaluate how the proposed wind farm may impact marine ecosystems, birds, ocean currents and more.

One of the next steps in the process would be a lease sale auction, which is predicted to happen in mid-2022. It may take a few years after a lease is granted for floating wind turbines to actually be constructed in the Morro Bay call area as a company then has to go through an extensive planning and review process.

PANEL EVENT TO DISCUSS OFFSHORE WIND ON CENTRAL COAST

The Tribune will host a virtual informational panel event on Nov. 19 to discuss the potential offshore wind energy development coming to the Central Coast. The panelists will be Congressman Salud Carbajal, BOEM Pacific regional director Doug Boren, California Energy Commissioner Karen Douglas, REACH CEO Melissa James and Cal Poly associate professor Ben Ruttenberg, director of the Center for Coastal Marine Sciences.

More information about the panel event will be released as it gets closer.