Minerals Management Service

People Promoting Energy, the Environment, and the Economy

News Release

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News Media Contact:
Leann Bullin, MMS (703) 787-1755
John Romero, MMS (805) 389-7533

MMS Funds Technical Research to Support Offshore Renewable Energy Development on the Outer Continental Shelf

Studies Focus on Technology, Operational Safety of Offshore Wind, Wave and Ocean Current Devices

WASHINGTON, DC – The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) recently funded four research studies to identify technological and operational safety issues related to the future development of offshore renewable energy on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). The studies focus on inspection methodologies and design characteristics of offshore wind turbines, installation and removal costs of ocean energy devices, and potential seafloor effects associated with the installation of renewable energy devices.

"We still have much to learn about offshore renewable energy activities", said MMS Director Liz Birnbaum. "We are continuously evaluating existing regulations and standards to adapt to these new technologies. Safety and efficiency are paramount, and we are contributing to both through studies, risk assessments, and inspections."

Initial findings from one of the studies, entitled, "Inspection Methodologies for Offshore Wind Turbine Facilities," were presented at the Global Marine Renewable Energy Conference in Seattle, Washington. Findings from this study will be used to develop supplemental offshore wind facility inspection guidelines related to worker-safety and cost-effectiveness. This study, conducted by Energo Engineering, Inc., is scheduled to be completed in June 2010.

Additional MMS-funded research includes:

• A study that is examining the structural design characteristics of offshore wind turbines. The study is being conducted by Applied Physical Sciences Corporation and is scheduled to be completed in August 2010.

• A study that is examining how differences in seabed conditions can affect scour - the erosion of the seabed by underwater tidal and current action – on the offshore environment, and whether the introduction of structures and cable-installation disturbance

can increase the scour susceptibility of the seafloor. Fugro West, Inc. is conducting this study through September 2010.

• A study that will establish a methodological framework for estimating the installation and removal costs of offshore wind, wave, and current devices on the OCS. The study was awarded to Energy Research Group, LLC and is scheduled to be completed in December 2010.

The MMS manages a robust research program and relies on the findings of its scientific studies to make informed decisions regarding energy development on the OCS. The MMS Technology Assessment & Research (TA&R) Program supports research associated with operational safety and pollution prevention for traditional and renewable offshore energy studies. The TA&R Program operates through contracts with universities, private firms, and government laboratories to assess safety-related technologies and to perform necessary applied research.

Additional information about MMS TA&R renewable energy studies can be found at:

http://www.mms.gov/tarprojectcategories/RenewableEnergy.htm

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