

OFFSHORE ALTERNATIVE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT: STATE NEEDS AND PROACTIVE APPROACHES

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Energy has long been a national interest, but the realm of possibilities as well as potential issues has been expanding rapidly in recent years. State Coastal Management Programs (CMPs) now consistently identify energy as a priority issue. While some states have experience with oil and gas development, the emergence of new alternative energy technologies has implications for all coastal states. Many of these new technologies seek to take advantage of coastal resources such as offshore wind and hydrokinetic (wind, wave, tidal, and current) energy. With any new endeavor, there are various unknowns and challenges. In the case of offshore alternative energy projects, some examples include potential resource and use impacts as well as technological and regulatory uncertainties. To address these unknowns in preparation for future projects, the Coastal States Organization (CSO) and several states are taking a proactive approach to offshore alternative energy development.

In response to coastal states' growing interest and needs regarding alternative energy issues, CSO formed an Alternative Energy Work Group. In 2008, the work group distributed a survey to assess current activity and needs related to wind and hydrokinetic energy. The types of baseline information collected for each state include the number of projects proposed or developed, type of developer, type of energy, and power capacity. The survey also sought to identify states' information and policy needs to address alternative energy projects in their coastal zone. Some of the key information needs include physical resource and environmental assessments, economic values, spatial mapping of human uses, and seafloor mapping. Notable policy needs include addressing the overlapping authorities of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and Minerals Management Service (MMS), improving federal coordination among federal agencies and coastal states, and establishing and/or supporting research and grant programs to address information gaps.

Many state CMPs are currently evaluating how best to prepare for, site and manage new offshore alternative energy projects. In addition to growing industry interest, some states are interested in encouraging alternative energy development their coastal zone. However, in order to ensure that such development is appropriate, several states are taking a proactive planning approach. Examples of current efforts include: developing guidelines and processes that facilitate permit review of new energy facilities; funding baseline studies and data collection that will aid in decision making; and, assessing the existing policy framework to determine its appropriateness. Another state effort that is particularly innovative is the development of ocean plans. The development of such plans allows states to take a comprehensive approach to coastal and ocean management

while also guiding the siting of energy facilities. Through these types of proactive approaches states will be better prepared to address offshore alternative energy development.

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