

Assessing Social Values Relative to Offshore Wind Energy Areas in the Gulf of Mexico Frequently Asked Questions

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Description: Researchers with the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's](#) (NOAA) [National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science](#) (NCCOS) are conducting this study to better understand how social factors, place-based values, and geographic location influence community support for or opposition to offshore wind energy development. To achieve this research goal, NCCOS will conduct a household survey of residents to collect information about their attitudes, beliefs, and values related to marine and coastal landscapes and offshore wind energy development. Additionally, information will be collected about residents' level of support for or opposition to offshore wind energy development. The study will also assess community perceptions of how offshore wind energy development may benefit or detract from the region. The study focuses on the Gulf of Mexico coast, specifically Texas and Louisiana, where the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) identified two [Wind Energy Areas](#) in October 2022, from which three lease areas were subsequently put up for auction in August 2023 resulting in one [lease](#) awarded off the coast of Lake Charles, Louisiana. In October 2023 BOEM announced four additional Wind Energy Areas to be potentially auctioned along with the unleashed area of the first auction, all of which are also located off the Texas and Louisiana coasts. On February 16, 2024, BOEM received an unsolicited application from Hecate Energy Gulf Wind LLC (Hecate Energy) for commercial wind energy lease(s) in Wind Energy Area (WEA) options C and D off the coast of Southeast Texas. The agency published a Request for Competitive Interest (RFCI) on July 29, 2024 for these WEA options in the Federal Register for a 45-day public comment period.

Who is conducting this study?

NCCOS is conducting this study. NOAA conducts science on the nation's oceans, coasts, and atmosphere, and provides citizens and decision-makers with information to better manage natural resources. The mission of NCCOS is to conduct science to inform coastal management.

Why is NCCOS conducting this study?

NCCOS has significant experience conducting research to inform coastal and marine spatial planning efforts throughout the U.S. and its territories, including the development of quantitative assessments to evaluate people's opinions, values, attitudes, and behaviors from a spatial perspective. This study will inform planning for use of the marine environment to achieve important national and regional goals.

Who is funding this study and why?

NCCOS is funding this study to help meet mandates at both NOAA and BOEM for assessing the potential environmental, human, and social impacts of developing offshore wind energy in the marine landscape. While NCCOS is funding the study, the research team is working in consultation and collaboration with BOEM and NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service.

How much does this study cost?

This multi-year study is funded by NCCOS at a total cost of approximately \$487,000. An estimated \$300,000 of that cost is budgeted for survey administration by an external vendor.

Is anyone else involved in the implementation of this survey?

NOAA will be working with a third-party vendor who has experience conducting social surveys. The study team of NCCOS social scientists is responsible for the survey design and guides decisions related to survey implementation.

Why is this study being conducted in Texas and Louisiana?

The study area was chosen because BOEM is in the process of establishing offshore wind energy development in the Gulf of Mexico. The agency identified Wind Energy Areas, leasing blocks, and has finalized one awarded lease (as of March 6, 2024). The proposed development areas are presently off the coast of Texas and Louisiana.

Is this project focused on just federal wind initiatives, or do they also cover Louisiana efforts? This project is focused on communities close to the wind areas identified by BOEM for offshore leases. We recognize both terrestrial wind efforts in Texas and Cajun Wind in Louisiana are ongoing efforts and more fully established in many ways, however, these initiatives are not the topic of this research.

How will you collect the data?

The data will be collected using a survey mailed to a randomly selected sample of households within the study area.

Who will be asked to take the survey?

The study area consists of the coastal counties of Texas (Aransas, Brazoria, Calhoun, Cameron, Chambers, Galveston, Harris, Jackson, Jefferson, Kenedy, Kleberg, Matagorda, Nueces, Orange, Refugio, San Patricio, Victoria, Willacy) and coastal parishes of Louisiana (Ascension, Assumption, Calcasieu, Cameron, Iberia, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lafourche, Livingston, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Martin, St. Mary, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne, Vermillion). Households in this region will be randomly selected to participate.

Is participation in the survey mandatory?

No, participation in the survey is voluntary.

What types of questions will you ask?

The survey will consist of questions designed to assess residents' opinions, values, attitudes, and behaviors about the Gulf of Mexico region and wind energy development. Questions about residents' level of support for or opposition to offshore wind energy development and its potential impacts will also be asked. Finally, demographic information of the survey participants will be collected.

Do I have to know about offshore wind energy to take this survey?

No. As residents of communities near proposed wind energy development areas, your opinions are important regardless of whether you are or are not familiar with wind energy.

Are responses confidential?

Yes, responses to the survey will remain confidential. For analysis and reporting purposes, all answers provided will be aggregated with the responses of others who participate in the study.

Can I take the survey?

Due to the random sampling design, only those who are selected through the sampling process will be invited to take the survey. All households within the study area are eligible for random selection. Selected households will receive an invitation in the mail to complete the survey. If you receive a survey in the mail, we encourage you to complete it and return it to us.

How long will the survey take?

The survey will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

When will data collection take place?

The survey will take place over a three to four month period in 2025.

What is the timeline for this study?

The study began in September 2023 and will last approximately three years.

Will a copy of the survey questions and survey data be made available to the public online?

Yes, the survey questions and survey data will be made available to the public online. Weblinks will be provided as soon as they are available.

What products will be derived from this study?

Findings from this study will be compiled into a final report and will be available to the public. The report will include data tables, maps, and other information. Data from this study may also be used to contribute to the scientific literature and presented at academic conferences.

Will the final report be posted on the NCCOS website?

Yes, the final report will be posted on the NCCOS project website. The link will be provided as soon as it is available.

Is this related to the NCCOS Modeling study?

No. The [NCCOS Spatial Modeling study](#) was focused on identifying suitable areas for leasing wind energy development in the Gulf of Mexico based on the presence, absence, and co-occurrence of spatial features. The modeling study was conducted by NCCOS in partnership with BOEM. Learn more about that effort here:

<https://coastalscience.noaa.gov/news/spatial-modeling-helps-boem-identify-optimal-areas-for-off-shore-wind-video/>

How will NOAA use the information collected in this study?

Information generated from this study will inform marine spatial planning efforts in the Gulf of Mexico. It will help NOAA and its constituents to better understand the social dimensions of offshore wind development in affected areas. It will also contribute to the scientific community's understanding of social perceptions of offshore wind energy more generally, and will inform marine spatial planning efforts across the nation.

How will findings from this study help my community?

The data collected through this research will help decision-makers assess the potential social impacts from offshore wind energy development in your region.

Will this study allow coastal residents to share opinions, regardless of whether they are for or against offshore wind development in the Gulf of Mexico?

Yes. The goal of this survey is to measure opinions related to offshore wind from residents of the study areas, so all opinions are welcome.

Who can I contact with questions about this study?

For questions about this study, please contact the study principal investigator, Theresa L Goedeke at theresa.goedeke@noaa.gov, or Sarah Gonyo at sarah.gonyo@noaa.gov.

Who can I contact to provide comments on offshore wind energy development?

For each proposed renewable lease sale, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management provides opportunities for the public to submit comments. Please visit the following website to stay apprised of current and future comment opportunities:

<https://www.boem.gov/renewable-energy/state-activities/gulf-mexico-activities>