



## US Department of Interior Moves to Speed Up Wind Energy

Posted by [JoulesBurn](#) on April 8, 2009 - 10:21am

Topic: [Alternative energy](#)

Tags: [offshore wind](#) [[list all tags](#)]

The U.S. Interior Department has recently released a report entitled "Survey of Available Data on OCS Resources and Identification of Data Gaps". The report, commissioned by Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and completed by the Minerals Management Service (MMS) branch of the department, outlines the energy resources available in the outer continental shelf (OCS) of the United States. Although the MMS is more well known for its role in auctioning off and granting permits for offshore oil and gas leases, the report is striking in that wind and wave energy potential receives top billing. The report (14 MB pdf) along with videos, podcasts, and presentation slides can be downloaded from the [department's web site](#).



*REPower 5M wind turbine, currently the world's largest, in the Scottish North Sea.*

---

One takeaway is that the MMS has been directed to place a larger emphasis on renewable energy. The report table of contents has the following three main sections:

- I. RENEWABLE ENERGY RESOURCES
- II. OIL AND GAS RESOURCE EVALUATION
- III. SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS AND RESOURCES

The report is primarily a compilation of data generated previously by MMS and other agencies such as the National Renewable Energy Laboratory showing the energy potential (both known

and estimated) offshore. A smaller fraction discusses the "information gaps", and there is obviously much work to be done before we really know how much renewable and untapped fossil energy can realistically be obtained. While the prominence of renewable energy in the overall OCS report is evident, this is not a new activity by MMS. [Here](#) is a press release from last summer on developing the regulatory framework.

Salazar chose the [25x25 Summit](#), a renewable energy conference, to announce the report's release, and is currently taking his show on the road for four public hearings. The first was yesterday in Atlantic City, NJ, and the next is April 8, 2009 in New Orleans. Salazar's emphasis on renewables has been highlighted in many [press reports](#):

Salazar said ocean winds along the East Coast can generate 1 million megawatts of power, roughly the equivalent of 3,000 medium-sized coal-fired power plants, or nearly five times the number of coal plants now operating in the United States, according to the Energy Department.

This elicited an expected response from the Coal Lobby:

Jason Hayes, a spokesman for the American Coal Council, said he was puzzled by Salazar's projections. He said wind-power plants face roadblocks including local opposition, concerns about their impact on wildlife, and problems in efficiently transmitting power from far offshore.

"It really is a stretch," he said of Salazar's estimate. "How you put that many new (wind) plants up, especially in deep water, is confusing. Even if you could do what he said, you still need to deal with the fact that the best wind plants generate power about 30 percent of the time. There's got to be something to back that up."

Local environmental groups had their own [message](#) to deliver, that being that their coastlines should not be reopened for oil and gas drilling. As a Senator from Colorado, Salazar had [voted](#) to end limits on offshore drilling in Florida. Thus, many groups are trying to get a sense of what Salazar's (or Obama's) priorities will be.

The Wind Energy Association is most interested in how the permitting process will work and what the resulting regulatory framework will look like. There has been one instance of [competing claims](#) for siting wind farms in New Jersey while waiting for the MMS to formulate its rules. There has also been a [feud](#) between the Interior Department and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on who gets to regulate tidal energy,

The dispute, which dates to late 2007, pits the Interior Department against the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission over which entity should approve projects that use coastal waves and currents to produce power.

Offshore wind development has been entangled in the dispute because Interior's Minerals Management Service does not want to separate wind projects from the tidal

wave, or hydrokinetic power, programs — which FERC in turn has refused to surrender, according to several officials who have followed the dispute.

but this seems to have been [resolved](#). The Energy Policy Act of 2005 gives Interior authority to regulate the transmission of electricity from offshore. A resource for following the developing regulatory framework is the [Offshore Energy Law Blog](#).

If anyone can make it to one of the remaining public meetings, be sure to drop us a line. Here is the schedule:

New Orleans, LA

When: Wednesday, April 8, 2009

Doors open at 8 AM, event begins at 9 AM Where: Tulane University

McAlister Auditorium

McAlister Drive between Freret and Willow Streets

6823 St. Charles Avenue

New Orleans, LA

Anchorage, AK

When: Tuesday, April 14, 2009

Doors open at 8 AM, event begins at 9 AM Where: Dena'ina Civic & Convention Center

600 W. Seventh Ave

Anchorage, AK

San Francisco, CA

When: Thursday, April 16, 2009

Doors open at 8 AM, event begins at 9 AM Where: Mission Bay Conference Center at UCSF

Robertson Auditorium

1675 Owens Street

San Francisco, CA



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 United States License](#).