

Status of U.S. Offshore Wind Leasing and Permitting: President Trump’s January 2025 Wind Leasing Memorandum

February 19, 2025

On January 20, 2025, the first day of his Administration, President Trump issued a memorandum titled “[Temporary Withdrawal of All Areas on the Outer Continental Shelf from Offshore Wind Leasing and Review of the Federal Government’s Leasing and Permitting Practices for Wind Projects](#).” This memorandum mandated several actions affecting offshore wind leasing and permitting on the U.S. outer continental shelf (OCS). First, President Trump used his authority under Section 12(a) of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA; [43 U.S.C. §1341\(a\)](#)) to withdraw the entire OCS from availability for new offshore wind leasing. The memorandum stated that this withdrawal “shall remain in effect until this Presidential Memorandum is revoked,” although there is [legal uncertainty](#) about a President’s authority to revoke a withdrawal made under OCSLA Section 12(a). Second, President Trump directed the Secretary of the Interior and other relevant Secretaries and agency heads to temporarily cease certain leasing and permitting activities for both offshore and onshore wind projects, pending completion of a “comprehensive assessment and review of Federal wind leasing and permitting practices.” The temporary halt applies to issuance of new or renewed approvals, rights of way, permits, leases, and loans for wind projects. (Separately, President Trump’s Executive Order 14154, “[Unleashing American Energy](#),” directed agencies to review processes, policies, and programs for issuing specified grants, loans, contracts, and other financial disbursements that could in some cases affect offshore wind development.) Third, President Trump ordered the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Attorney General as needed, to review “the ecological, economic, and environmental necessity of terminating or amending any existing wind energy leases, identifying any legal bases for such removal.”

Effect on Offshore Wind Lease Sales

President Trump’s withdrawal of the OCS from new wind leasing affects potential offshore wind lease sales that had been announced by the Biden Administration. That Administration had initiated planning activities for a second lease sale in the [Central Atlantic area](#) and had [announced](#) other possible lease sales over the next five years, including potential further sales in the New York Bight, Gulf of Maine, and Gulf of Mexico (now [renamed](#) the Gulf of America), as well as offshore of Oregon, California, Hawaii, Guam,

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IN12509

Puerto Rico, and/or the U.S. Virgin Islands. [Section 50251](#) of P.L. 117-269, commonly known as the Inflation Reduction Act, had authorized or directed wind leasing activities for some of these areas. President Trump’s memorandum states that the withdrawal under Section 12(a) “temporarily prevents consideration of any area in the OCS for any new or renewed wind energy leasing.”

Effects on Existing Leases

The Department of the Interior’s (DOI’s) Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) currently administers [approximately 40 existing offshore wind leases](#), many of which may be affected by the memorandum’s temporary halt on offshore wind permitting and approvals. Most of these leases have not yet received the necessary permits and approvals for project construction. After a lease is awarded, developers submit [construction and operations plans](#) (COPs) and related planning materials to BOEM for approval and apply for permits that must be obtained from other agencies before project construction may commence, including permits from the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA) and the [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#). The agencies must comply with the [National Environmental Policy Act](#) (NEPA; 42 U.S.C. §§4321 et seq.) when evaluating project proposals. BOEM typically leads the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) and record of decision, which other agencies may sign onto, to inform conditions for approving COPs and issuing permits.

President Trump’s memorandum halts the issuance of new or renewed approvals or permits for offshore (and onshore) wind projects, pending completion of the required comprehensive review of federal leasing and permitting practices. The memorandum does not appear to explicitly address whether activities prior to approval and permit issuance, such as ongoing work on EISs, could proceed during the temporary halt. However, BOEM has [announced](#) that at least one such activity—a public meeting on BOEM’s notice of intent to prepare an EIS for the proposed Vineyard Mid-Atlantic wind project—has been canceled in light of President Trump’s memorandum. Separately, on January 29, 2025, the acting Secretary of the Interior issued [Secretarial Order 3415 A1](#), temporarily suspending delegations to issue onshore and offshore renewable energy authorizations for a 60-day period.

For 12 commercial-scale projects, all in the Atlantic region, approvals and permits already have been issued to authorize construction and operations. These projects are at various stages of completion. The 12-turbine [South Fork Wind Farm](#) off the coasts of Rhode Island and Massachusetts is fully constructed and operating. The 62-turbine [Vineyard Wind 1 project](#) off Massachusetts is partly constructed and has begun delivering power to the grid. Some but not all of the other projects have initiated construction, either offshore or at onshore connection points. President Trump’s temporary prohibition on issuance of permits and approvals would not appear to directly affect these projects in most cases, since they have already received federal approvals. There could, however, be situations where a permitted project would need to seek further approvals. For instance, following a July 2024 incident where a turbine blade broke and scattered debris in the water, Vineyard Wind submitted an [addendum](#) to its COP addressing its procedures for correcting the failure. (BOEM [approved](#) this addendum on January 17, 2025, prior to issuance of President Trump’s memorandum; had it not already been approved, such action would now appear to be halted under the executive order.)

President Trump’s directive to the Secretary of the Interior and the Attorney General to review potential termination or amendment of existing leases also could potentially affect leases at multiple stages, depending on the results of the review and the legal requirements of the leases. More generally, some observers have [noted](#) overall challenges to the U.S. offshore wind industry that executive actions could exacerbate, related to [global financial and supply chain difficulties](#) for offshore wind and the challenge of establishing the nascent industry in the United States, including capacity for [equipment manufacturing](#), [support vessels](#), and [skilled labor](#).

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