

Oregon Floating Offshore Wind Energy Roadmap with Exit Ramps

CONSIDERATIONS



Frequently Asked Questions (last updated 4/25/24)

Why did the informal offshore wind work group come together? And how was it decided who would participate?

Following Governor Kotek’s June 9, 2023 letter requesting the Bureau of Offshore Energy Management (BOEM) pause its leasing process to provide for deeper engagement with Tribes and communities, an informal group representing a wide diversity of experience and viewpoints about Floating Offshore Wind (FOSW) began to meet regularly.

The group included fishermen, renewable energy interests, labor organizations, local government, environmental and climate groups, science and education groups, and manufacturing.

What did the work group start off to do and why? And how did that evolve?

When the group first met in August 2024, it started simply with the opportunity to explore the diverse interests and opinions around FOSW energy. As Renewable Northwest, Blue-Green Alliance, and Midwater Trawlers Cooperative convened the first meeting, there was no expectation on what the group would do. Those first meetings evolved into a more defined purpose of:

- Serving as a learning forum to increase understanding and awareness of FOSW energy issues; and
- Developing a set of actions the State of Oregon and others could take to prepare the State of Oregon to proactively plan for and consider FOSW energy in federal and state waters off Oregon.

That purpose evolved in the fall to explicitly call for Oregon to develop a “Roadmap with Exit Ramps” for FOSW Energy. The Roadmap is envisioned as applying to:

- the full spatial extent of FOSW development for both state and federal waters off Oregon, and the estuary and onshore infrastructure needed to support and transmit offshore wind energy;
- the entire life cycle of FOSW development including planning, siting, development, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning; and
- a definition of Oregon’s strategic role in the policy, research, and business of FOSW energy nationally and globally.

The concept of an “Exit Ramp” was a critical part of the group’s deliberations. The group recognized that offshore wind energy development, in a particular location on Oregon’s coast, may need an “Exit Ramp” where there is time to consider more information, avoid impacts, and optimize benefits.

The group ended up drafting HB 4080, which passed the Legislature in March 2024. It also crafted a Roadmap Considerations document to guide the State of Oregon as it built the Roadmap called for in HB 4080.

What the group IS NOT...

All along, the group was clear that it is not the ones to build the Roadmap. That process needs to be public, broadly inclusive, and led by the State of Oregon.

Participation in the group was NOT any indication of a position for or against FOSW energy—either the currently proposed Wind Energy Areas, or any future activity. Every group member was free to continue their own advocacy, and hold their own opinions on FOSW.

What did collaboration and debate in the work group look like?

The group never tried to find the “right” answers for FOSW. That is the role for much broader public debate. Instead, the group worked very hard to hear, and recognize, the diverse threats and opportunities connected to FOSW energy development. The group met monthly for nine months. The group disagreed, a lot. But always, group members listened to others in ways they individually wanted to be listened to. HB 4080 and the Roadmap Considerations document each went through multiple interactions. Feedback was received and debated. Words were smithed. And the group didn’t stop until everyone could live with a document. That doesn’t mean that everyone agrees with every statement in the Roadmap Considerations document. It DOES mean that everyone was confident the document included their views and the views of others who think differently.

What is the Roadmap Considerations document? And what is in it?

The Roadmap Considerations document is NOT the Roadmap with Exit Ramps. It is a set of considerations for the State of Oregon and others to use as they build the Roadmap. There is a lot of information. The Roadmap includes:

- An Executive Summary
- Context on why a Roadmap is important for Oregon, and some background on existing ocean uses, policy, and economic potential
- Seven objectives to be considered each with:
 - A definition of the objective
 - Key Topics to be considered
 - Key Questions to address unknowns about FOSW development
- Four cross-cutting lenses to be considered across all FOSW decisions
- Some ideas on how to build a Roadmap
- A summary of the process the informal group used to craft the document

The seven objectives are (in no particular priority order):

- achieve clean energy mandates;
- protect the environment, ocean ecosystem, and conserve birds, fish, and wildlife;
- protect cultural/archaeological resources, Tribal subsistence, culturally significant viewsheds, and other resources important for Tribes;
- support coastal communities and towns;
- protect existing seafood providers (processors and harvesters); and
- create economic opportunity and foster domestic supply chain; and develop Oregon's offshore wind energy workforce.

The four cross-cutting lenses are (in no particular priority order):

- connected to the regional and national context;
- equitable, transparent, and the product of meaningful engagement with affected communities;
- place-based, integrative, adaptive, and strategic; and open to exit ramps for a pause on projects.

Why didn't the Ocean Policy Advisory Council produce the Roadmap Considerations document?

The informal group didn't know what it might create, or even if dialogue across FOSW differences was possible when it first convened. The group also included groups that were not part of OPAC—especially labor. The group needed the kind of informal space to explore. OPAC is one of the recipients of this document.

Also, these Roadmap Considerations aren't the only considerations as DLCD convenes a group to build the Roadmap. Others should also feel free to provide their views on considerations.

What comes next?

This informal group successfully infused a demand for better public engagement process into the State of Oregon's approach to considering FOSW development. That demand expressed itself in the state's commitment to build a Roadmap with broader and better engagement. The group demonstrated the opportunity and need for shared learning around a massive and complex issue, and the ability for people who disagree strongly to listen and be heard.

The foundations this group set were a beginning, one that the State of Oregon and others can build from, hopefully with positive outcomes.