

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

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On January 20, 2025, President Trump issued the memorandum “[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](#),” which 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 wind energy leasing. Second, he directed the Secretary of the Interior and other relevant Secretaries and agency heads to temporarily cease certain leasing and permitting activities for offshore and onshore wind projects, pending 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, 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 potentially 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 wind leasing affects potential offshore wind lease sales announced by the Biden Administration. These include a second lease sale for the [Central Atlantic area](#) and [potential further sales](#) for 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, 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.”

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## Effects on Existing Leases

The Department of the Interior's (DOI's) Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) administers [approximately 40 existing offshore wind leases](#), many of which may be affected by the 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 materials to BOEM for approval and apply for necessary permits from other agencies, including the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA) and the [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#). 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 agencies' issuance of new or renewed approvals or permits for offshore (and onshore) wind projects, pending a comprehensive review of federal wind 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, may proceed during the temporary halt. BOEM has announced that some such activities (e.g., public meetings related to EISs for projects in the [Atlantic](#) and [Pacific](#) regions) are canceled or postponed in light of the memorandum. Separately, on January 29, 2025, the acting Secretary of the Interior issued [Secretarial Order 3415 A1](#), suspending for 60 days delegations to issue onshore and offshore renewable energy authorizations.

For 11 active 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](#) offshore 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. The 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 turbine blade break that 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.)

The President's directive to the Secretary of the Interior and Attorney General to review potential termination or amendment of existing leases also could affect leases at multiple stages, depending on the results of the review and the legal requirements of the leases. Further, 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](#).

## Considerations for Congress

The memorandum states that the President's withdrawal "temporarily" prohibits further wind leasing on the OCS "until this Presidential Memorandum is revoked." There is [legal uncertainty](#) about a President's authority to revoke a withdrawal made under OCSLA Section 12(a), and Congress could consider whether to clarify presidential authority in this respect. Some bills (e.g., H.R. 513 in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress) would limit the Section 12(a) withdrawal authority. Concerning offshore wind leasing specifically, H.R. 1781 and S. 837 would provide that the President's memorandum shall have no force or effect, and no

federal funds may be used to implement it. In contrast, some bills would legislatively establish offshore wind leasing prohibitions in certain areas (e.g., H.R. 674 would prohibit wind leasing in parts of the Gulf of Maine).

Regarding permitting, some Members of Congress and other stakeholders [support](#) the President's approach of halting offshore wind permitting pending further study of [marine wildlife effects](#) and other potential impacts. Some [118<sup>th</sup> Congress bills](#) would have required similar studies. Others have [opposed](#) the President's actions as endangering U.S. jobs in the offshore wind industry and limiting an energy source that could help meet growing electricity demands. H.R. 1781 and S. 837 would nullify the President's memorandum. Congress also has considered whether and to what extent to fund offshore wind activities during the [annual appropriations](#) process.

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