

Two N.C. Solar Center staff to serve on the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's North Carolina Offshore Renewable Energy Task Force

Story by: Shannon Helm

Steve Kalland, Director of the N.C. Solar Center, and Jennifer Banks, Wind Energy Project Coordinator at the N.C. Solar Center, will serve on the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM) offshore renewable energy task force. They will work with other state, federal, local and tribal government representatives who are coordinating efforts to facilitate commercial leasing for renewable energy on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) offshore from North Carolina. The leasing process will begin with a Request for Interest for commercial wind energy leasing, planned to be released this year, which will be developed with input from the task force.



"BOEM created this task force to facilitate the effective and efficient review of proposed renewable energy projects on the OCS offshore North Carolina," said BOEM Director Michael R. Bromwich. "We will work together with the state to enable North Carolina to develop renewable energy off its coast, thereby expanding our nation's energy resource portfolio."

"North Carolina appreciates the cooperation of the Bureau and this opportunity for this good start in developing the policies and procedures to expand the state's renewable energy resources in ways that are compatible with the lives and livelihoods of those who make the coast their home and depend upon it for their livelihood," said Jennifer Bumgarner, North Carolina Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Energy.

In April 2009, President Barack Obama and Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced the final framework for renewable energy development on the OCS. This framework establishes the process BOEM uses for granting leases, easements, and rights-of-way for offshore renewable energy development activities, such as the siting and construction of wind generation facilities on the OCS. The framework also allows BOEM to use task forces in carrying out its responsibilities for authorizing OCS renewable energy activities in partnership with state, local, and tribal governments, and federal agencies. As part of the "Smart from the Start" wind initiative announced by Secretary Salazar in the fall of 2010 to facilitate offshore wind development, this task force will help identify priority areas on the OCS that have generally bountiful wind energy and relatively fewer potential environmental and use conflicts than other areas offshore North Carolina. BOEM will use that information to identify wind energy areas along the OCS that may be particularly suitable for potential offshore wind development.

Task forces have previously been established with Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Virginia, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, North Carolina and New York, and are in process for South Carolina and Florida.