

Assembly Bill 80

West Coast Offshore Wind Science Entity

Assemblymember Dawn Addis

Senator John Laird (Co-Author)

SUMMARY

AB 80 creates the West Coast Offshore Wind Science Entity at the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) to coordinate and oversee the science and monitoring necessary to inform the environmentally responsible development of offshore wind energy off the coast of California.

BACKGROUND

On December 6-7 the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management held an offshore wind energy lease sale for five call areas on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) off central and northern California -- three off the San Luis Obispo County coast and two off the coast of Humboldt County. The winning bidders cumulatively paid the federal government over \$750 million for the right to build floating, but tethered, offshore wind energy wind farms off the California coast.

In preparation for the rollout of offshore wind energy in California, the Legislature passed and the Governor signed Assembly Bill 525 (Chiu, Chapter 231, Statutes of 2021), which required the California Energy Commission (CEC) to work with various state entities to develop a strategic plan for offshore wind energy developments off the coast of California. Among other things, AB 525 also tasked the CEC with coordinating with relevant state agencies to make recommendations “regarding potential significant adverse environmental impacts and use conflicts, such as avoidance, minimization, monitoring, mitigation, and adaptive management, consistent with California’s long-term renewable energy, greenhouse gas emission reduction, and biodiversity goals.”

PROBLEM

Responsible development of offshore wind energy includes a robust scientific research and monitoring plan, as well as filling data gaps

about the effects of offshore wind development, to understand how habitat and marine life will interact with offshore wind energy infrastructure and development activities. Currently, there is no one state entity required to be responsible for this work. Such an entity would be modeled on a similar organization on the East Coast – the Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative for Offshore Wind. The Collaborative is convening key governmental, industry, academic, and environmental stakeholders to develop an integrated science plan that reflects research and data collection needs for offshore wind in the Atlantic Ocean.

SOLUTION

AB 80 requires the Ocean Protection Council to convene and oversee the important scientific work necessary for decision makers to understand how habitat and marine life will interact with offshore wind infrastructure and development. The OPC was specifically created to coordinate with state agencies on policies that affect coastal waters and to convene scientists to provide research and evaluation to decision makers in this subject area. It is ideally suited for this work.

SUPPORT

Monterey Bay Aquarium (co-sponsor)

Natural Resources Defense Council (co-sponsor)

CONTACT

Jim Evans, Chief of Staff

916-319-2030; jim.evans@asm.ca.gov.