



LOUISIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

The voice of Louisiana's wildlife and natural resources since 1940.

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Resolution No. 1, 2023

SUBJECT: OFFSHORE WIND DEVELOPMENT IN THE GULF OF MEXICO

WHEREAS, President Joe Biden's administration has set a goal to generate 30 gigawatts of offshore wind capacity by 2030; and

WHEREAS, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is the federal agency responsible for managing development of the nation's offshore resources in an environmentally and economically responsible way; and

WHEREAS, on October 31, 2022, BOEM finalized the first two Wind Energy Areas (WEA) for offshore wind development in the Gulf of Mexico, located off the coasts of Galveston, TX and Lake Charles, LA; and

WHEREAS, Governor John Bel Edwards established the Climate Initiatives Task Force to develop Louisiana's first Climate Action Plan, which was approved on January 31, 2022; and

WHEREAS, the Climate Action Plan includes generating at least 5,000 megawatts of wind energy in order to meet a net-zero goal for greenhouse gas emissions by 2050; and

WHEREAS, the Gulf of Mexico is a globally significant ecoregion – which includes ecologically important areas – teeming with wildlife, including marine mammals, bats, butterflies, neotropical migrant birds, nesting colonies of coastal and marine birds, and wintering grounds for millions of waterfowl; and

WHEREAS, the Gulf Coast supports nearly half of North America's migrating birds including the threatened Piping Plover and Red Knot, as well as resident iconic species of concern like the Black Skimmer, Brown Pelican, and Clapper Rail; and

WHEREAS, potential threats to wildlife from offshore wind energy development, operations, and maintenance include underwater noise, vessel strikes, and collision risks; and

WHEREAS, waterbirds and waterfowl are particularly vulnerable to disturbance from vessel traffic, as these species flush in response to oncoming vessels, which could reduce their energy (particularly during winter); and

WHEREAS, it's important for all U.S. offshore wind projects to be sited, developed, operated, and decommissioned responsibly; and

WHEREAS, responsible offshore wind development follows the mitigation hierarchy to first avoid, then minimize and mitigate impacts from development, and

WHEREAS, identifying WEAs in areas where they will have the least environmental impact is a critical first step in responsible siting; and

WHEREAS, adjustments in timing and methods of survey and construction activities would reduce impacts to wildlife; and

WHEREAS, operations and maintenance plans that employ proven wildlife impact-reduction strategies and decommissioning plans that ensure long-term planning for all project development sites would further reduce environmental impacts.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Louisiana Wildlife Federation urges the development of a “Gold Standard” for responsible offshore wind development that (i) avoids, minimizes, mitigates, and monitors adverse impacts on marine and coastal habitats and the wildlife that rely on them, (ii) meaningfully engages state and local governments and stakeholders from the outset, (iii) uses the best available scientific and technological data to ensure science-based and stakeholder-informed decision making, and (iv) is adaptable by incorporating technological advances as they become available.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Louisiana Wildlife Federation insists on strict standards, parameters, and barriers to entry for developers to meet these standards.

Adopted by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation Board of Directors at its meeting on February 11, 2023 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.