



# LOUISIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

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

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Resolution No. 1, 2024

## **SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT OF OFFSHORE WIND IN FEDERAL WATERS 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 (WEAs) for offshore wind development in the Gulf of Mexico, located off the coasts of Galveston, TX and Lake Charles, LA; and

WHEREAS, on August 29, 2023, RWE Offshore US Gulf, LLC was the winner of the 102,480-acre Lake Charles Lease Area, which has the potential to generate approximately 1.24 gigawatts of offshore wind energy capacity; and

WHEREAS, on October 27, 2023, BOEM announced additional final WEAs in the Gulf of Mexico for future lease sales; 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 (5 GW) 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 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, there are 2.9 billion fewer breeding birds in North America since 1970; 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, five of the world's seven sea turtle species inhabit the Gulf of Mexico year-round, and all five of these species are protected by under the Endangered Species Act (ESA): leatherbacks (endangered), loggerheads (threatened), Kemp's ridleys (critically endangered), green (threatened), and hawksbill (endangered); and

WHEREAS, nearshore Louisiana waters are home to two coastal fish species that are protected under the ESA: giant manta rays(threatened) and Gulf sturgeon (threatened); and

WHEREAS, long-distance seasonal migrating bats are the most vulnerable to fatalities with wind energy infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, monarch butterflies (a candidate species under the ESA) have an extensive migration of up to 3,000 miles from Canada to Mexico and back; and

WHEREAS, benthic habitat in the Gulf of Mexico supports biodiverse marine communities, ecologically and commercially important fisheries, and biogeochemical cycling; and

WHEREAS, potential threats to wildlife from offshore wind energy development, operations, and maintenance include underwater noise, vessel strikes, and collision risks with turbine blades; 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, standardized monitoring is necessary to assess the degree to which efforts to avoid, minimize, and mitigate harm have been successful, while also enabling the adaptive management and effective mitigation of adverse environmental impacts that may occur; and

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

WHEREAS, plans that employ wildlife impact-reduction strategies (such as vessel speed restrictions, acoustic and visual monitoring, underwater noise reduction, minimization of artificial lighting, ultraviolet lighting [to deter bats], and turbine blade adjustments to enhance visibility to wildlife) 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 acknowledges the important role that renewable energy plays in our nation's energy transition.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Louisiana Wildlife Federation supports the responsible development of offshore wind which (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.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Louisiana Wildlife Federation urges the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and other relevant agencies to establish monitoring standards for potential individual and cumulative impacts on wildlife and be responsible for approving monitoring, adaptive management, and compensatory mitigation plans and practices.

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Louisiana Wildlife Federation urges BOEM to fill critical gaps in baseline data on wildlife at a variety of spatial and temporal scales.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Louisiana Wildlife Federation supports a conservation program bid credit for conservation of threatened and endangered species, migratory birds, and other potential wildlife and habitat impacts.

*Adopted by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation Board of Directors on February 5, 2024.*