

So What? Department of Defense Offshore Wind Mission Compatibility Assessments

A priority of all ocean planners is to make sure their sites are compatible with the locations and ways in which the [Department of Defense](#) (DoD) is using the ocean. People and other organisms use the ocean in an abundance of ways—animals call it home, fishermen use it as a livelihood, and the DoD uses it to help protect the nation. More recently, renewable energy has emerged as a potential ocean use. To effectively make use of the ocean, however, people need to manage areas for compatibility with all other ocean uses. DoD has helped this process of determining multiple uses by creating its offshore wind mission compatibility assessments—areas in which DoD has an interest and that may not be compatible with offshore energy development.

So why should ocean energy planners utilize the wind stipulation area dataset?

1. **The dataset provides a visual representation of military assets and offshore resources.** DoD developed these assessments to assist the renewable energy task force process led by the Bureau of Ocean Energy management (BOEM). Under this process, BOEM has authority to lease Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) lands for energy development and government agencies with an interest in activities on the OCS are allowed to provide information describing their existing activities. In its analysis, DoD assessed each lease block to determine potential conflicts between wind energy construction and operation and DoD activities. The analysis, therefore, gives the user a visual representation of compatibility between offshore wind and military assets and activities but does not necessarily provide insight into the question of compatibility between DoD interests and other ocean uses such as commercial fishing or recreational diving. Users need to keep that in mind when assessing a lease block for an activity other than wind energy.
2. **The stipulation might not cover the entire lease block.** Lease blocks are large areas, roughly three miles by three miles in dimension. Since DoD used the lease block as its unit of analysis, the presence of a conflict anywhere within the block caused the whole block to be marked as either “Site Specific Stipulations” or “Recommended Wind Exclusion” (see below for further definitions). Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the classification and then do further research to determine if there is still space within the block that is not in conflict with DoD.
3. **The dataset can help determine if there are conflicts.** The lease blocks were assigned to one of four categories: “No Restrictions,” meaning no significant conflicts were identified; “Site Specific Stipulations,” meaning potential conflicts exist and may require site-specific mitigation measures; “Recommended Wind Exclusion,” which means significant conflicts were identified;

and “Not Assessed,” which pertains to the blocks that have not been assessed for compatibility with offshore wind (the blocks with no color fill).

Quick Caveats. The most important caveat to this dataset is that the assessments are specific to offshore wind energy. Users are encouraged to seek additional sources of information to determine compatibility of ocean uses other than offshore wind with DoD assets and activities in their planning areas of interest. Using the DoD Offshore Wind Mission Compatibility Assessments dataset to draw inferences about other planning processes is not recommended.

For questions, please contact nos.csc.mmc@noaa.gov.