



February 1, 2025

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
Department of Interior
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Washington, DC 20024

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**Request for Permanent Ban on Offshore Wind Energy Development
in Kaiwi Channel Area near East Oahu, Hawai'i**

Aloha Secretary Burgum,

The Kaiwi Coalition consists of deeply respected, community-founded and -led stewardship organizations that have been protecting and conserving the cultural and environmental resources along the Kaiwi Coast in East Oahu, Hawai'i, mauka to makai (from the mountains to the sea), for over a hundred years. Native Hawaiian leaders in our Coalition have also been stewarding the culturally significant Kaiwi Channel between the Hawaiian islands of Oahu and Molokai for generations.

We are deeply concerned about the Department of Interior Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM's) announced plans to lease a site for an industrial scale offshore wind farm near the Kaiwi Channel 12 miles off East Oahu, Hawai'i sometime between 2026 and 2028. Progression/Aukahi Energy, the developer interested in bidding on the lease, has briefed that its plans include 23 to 50 large turbines with blades longer than a football field as part of its offshore energy grid infrastructure to become operational by 2035.

BOEM has been targeting Oahu for offshore wind development for over a decade. In 2016, BOEM's plans to auction a lease for offshore wind development off of Oahu was tabled by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) during President Trump's first administration due to clear concerns about the threat the industrialization of Oahu's ocean wilderness would pose to national security. President Trump's DoD was unwilling to trade the navigational safety of our ships, submarines and aircraft for windmills. In 2019, Progression/Aukahi Energy approached Hawaii Congressman Ed Case for support to site a proposed industrial scale offshore wind farm off of Waikiki. Congressman Case stopped that plan due to its disastrous impact on tourism.

The Biden Administration's subsequent Green New Deal turbocharged offshore wind development with its arbitrary goal of "30 Gigawatts by 2030" subsidized by billions of federal tax dollars. In 2023, Biden's DoD, determining that climate change is the greatest threat to our national security, and mandated to be a "good neighbor" to BOEM, green-lighted Progression/Aukahi Energy and its global conglomerate partner's new proposal to develop their industrial scale offshore wind farm near the Kaiwi Channel in East Oahu if they win the lease.

With DoD's sanction of Progression/Aukahi Energy to bid on the Kaiwi Channel area lease, BOEM was moving forward with the Biden agenda regardless of our community's overwhelming opposition to offshore wind development in this sacred location. Certain of its success at winning the lease at auction, Progression/Aukahi Energy asked BOEM to accelerate the auction date from 2028 to 2026 to ensure their wind farm can be operational by 2035 despite the fact that BOEM has not contracted the legally obligated studies that are required to be completed before the auction can proceed.

BOEM asserted during local community outreach in July 2024 that once the planning process for an offshore wind project starts, communities most affected cannot stop the lease auction and offshore wind farm development regardless of overwhelming opposition.

Although opposed to earlier offshore wind farm development off Waikiki due to its disastrous impact on tourism, our Congressional delegation to date has been silent regarding our ongoing opposition to offshore wind in the Kaiwi Channel area despite its devastating impact on Kaiwi's pristine ocean wilderness, marine wildlife, and ancient cultural legacy.

We are therefore writing you directly to express our full support for President Trump's Executive Order temporarily withdrawing all areas of the outer continental shelf from leasing for wind energy. We also formally request that the Kaiwi Channel area off Oahu at a minimum, and all areas off Hawai'i in general, be withdrawn permanently from leasing for wind energy.

Hawai'i is the "endangered species capital of the world." Many mammals, including humpback whales and dolphins; as well as Hawaiian monk seals, sea turtles, and several species of seabirds protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), call our ocean wilderness their home. We are appalled at the number of dead whales and dolphins washing ashore around East Coast offshore wind projects, and the known threat offshore wind projects pose to the critically endangered north Atlantic right whale. This critically endangered species is supposed to be protected by the ESA, but federal agencies tasked with their protection have instead chosen to support offshore wind development. Our urgent request for this total ban of offshore wind development in the Kaiwi Channel specifically, and Hawai'i in general, is also to prevent federal agencies still supporting the Biden legacy "30 Gigawatt by 2030" offshore wind agenda, despite President Trump's Executive Order, from allowing similar irreversible devastation to, or extinction of, ESA protected species in Hawaii's ocean wilderness that may also be affected by offshore wind projects.

Further, the full impacts of wind energy development are not fully understood. BOEM is incapable of developing guaranteed cumulative programmatic mitigation measures to coastal and other targeted areas like Hawaii's ocean wilderness. And based on what we see happening on the East Coast, the irreparable damage that will be done to environmental resources and the cultural fabric of coastal regions and island States like Hawai'i will far outweigh any proposed benefits of offshore wind projects BOEM is targeting for our communities.

While ocean wind energy may be a viable form of energy production, it is not viable without heavy subsidies requiring unlimited taxpayer investment. Offshore wind energy is the most expensive of all energy being produced, and the most unreliable. Its cumulative programmatic impacts on the marine environment, ESA protected species, fisheries, cultural resources, and coastal communities are not understood. Neither are the impacts of long-term maintenance, accurate assessment of mammal, bird, and fisheries "take" from turbine encounters, or disposal of offshore wind infrastructures in deep ocean environments like the Kaiwi Channel area. While we support renewable energy initiatives, offshore wind farms in deep ocean marine wildernesses around an island State like Hawaii offer monumental challenges antithetical to BOEM's zeal for accelerated development, lack of community outreach, and dearth of information about the cumulative effect of industrial scale offshore wind farms on environmental and cultural resources.

Finally, as he did in 2016, we are confident that President Trump does not consider climate change the greatest threat to our national security. The Indo Pacific region faces a very clear increased national security threat and surge in operational tempo to counter that threat from real world forces, and the industrialization of Oahu's ocean wilderness by international offshore wind farm conglomerates adversely impacts national security. We therefore respectfully urge you to expeditiously ensure that the outer continental shelf of the Kaiwi Channel area of Oahu at a minimum, and all areas off Hawai'i in general, are permanently withdrawn from leasing wind energy.

We would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss this letter and are available to answer any questions.

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration of this request.

Respectfully,


Elizabeth Reilly


Elizabeth Bishop

CC: Congressman Ed Case, repedcase@mail.house.gov
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