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REACH Central Coast submission

Additional submitted attachment is included below.



Ideas + Action for a Thriving Central Coast

March 11, 2022

California Energy Commission
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Workshop on Assembly Bill 525 Strategic Plan for Offshore Wind Energy Planning Goals

Dear California Energy Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to the California Energy Commission (CEC) as it seeks to assess and quantify the maximum feasible capacity and establish megawatt planning goals for offshore wind energy pursuant to AB 525.

By way of background, REACH is a nonprofit, economic impact organization with a mission to increase economic prosperity on the Central Coast of California through big thinking, bold action and regional collaboration. The north star of our work is collaboration with business, education, government and nonprofit partners to create 15,000 good paying jobs in the region by 2030 and establish the Central Coast as a place where current and future generations have the opportunity to thrive. The Central Coast faces significant economic headwinds, and half of middle-class residents say they are considering leaving the region. The economy has been particularly affected by changes in the energy ecosystem, with the slated decommissioning of the Diablo Canyon Power Plant – the region’s largest private sector employer – and decline in fossil fuel activity leading to a reduction of many good-paying jobs.

Our state faces two unique opportunities related to the deployment of offshore wind energy on the Central Coast: to advance state and national climate goals and to jumpstart a new, clean energy sector and supply chain that can provide good jobs to residents displaced by the energy transition, positioning the state at the forefront of the 21st century economy. We can and must seize both opportunities.

We strongly encourage the CEC to set bold megawatt planning goals for 2030 and 2045 that 1) enable the rapid scale up of a new clean energy sector and investment in waterfront infrastructure on the Central Coast 2) maximize the value of existing Central Coast transmission infrastructure and 3) ensure long-term growth for this critical new industry.

With an eye to the future, REACH commissioned and released an [economic impact report](#) last year on the impacts of the Morro Bay Call Area for offshore wind energy development to the Central Coast region. We found that the development of a 3GW wind farm would equate to \$262M in annual economic impact and 650 good paying, long-term jobs. These significant job and economic benefits would be augmented further under a 7GW scenario. The report recognizes that these economic benefits are contingent on the development of port infrastructure to support the wind farms, and that this infrastructure is currently underdeveloped on the Central Coast. Due to this recognized need, regional leaders came together to outline our joint commitment in a [letter](#) to President Biden and Governor

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Newsom and have been working to advance planning for port infrastructure on the Central Coast to support the offshore wind industry, with the belief that offshore wind is an essential ingredient in our regional economic diversification strategy.

Bold megawatt planning goals for the Central Coast will not only advance state and national climate goals but are critical to initiating decision-making now on the development of ports and other onshore infrastructure that is essential to the creation of these new, good-paying jobs. It would also ensure that our state captures the broader economic and fiscal benefits of offshore wind energy, create economies of scale that could support ratepayer savings, and diversify our energy portfolio. Time is of the essence due to the looming closure of Diablo Canyon Power Plant and the loss of jobs and energy production that will follow for our region and state. Consequently, this will free up existing transmission infrastructure that is without parallel in our state and is positioned in close proximity to potential offshore wind areas.

Ambitious megawatt planning goals will also create the space for continued and critical dialogue between stakeholders on how to collectively advance our climate and economic goals while at the same time addressing potential impacts. The development of the Morro Bay Wind Energy Area has been the result of intensive discussions between federal, state and local partners to serve environmental, energy and national security interests. These discussions were enabled by a bold vision on the potential for offshore wind energy and a willingness by stakeholders to work through these important issues towards this overarching goal. Bold goals for the long-term growth of Central Coast offshore wind energy can support this ongoing and essential dialogue on our clean energy future and the economic potential for our region and state.

Thank you for considering these comments and we appreciate the CEC's leadership on these issues.

Sincerely,



Melissa James
President/CEO
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