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## Alternatives

### Green Energy Heads Offshore

William Pentland, 09.24.08, 4:20 PM ET

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Congress quietly lifted the ban on offshore oil drilling yesterday, opening the vast waters of the outer continental shelf to oil and gas companies eager to exploit the area's substantial energy resources. But oil rigs aren't the only thing you can expect to see being built offshore.

Ambitious plans for offshore renewable energy projects are crowding the waters--floating wind farms, tidal-power turbines and wave-energy barges--all expected in the next decade. Unlike offshore oil and gas production, offshore renewable energy projects often avoid

thorny siting issues and enhance the bottom line.

In August, the U.S. Department of the Interior launched a new program to shepherd and oversee a number of renewable energy projects off the East and West Coasts through the regulatory process. In 2005, Congress gave the Interior Department the green light to establish an alternative energy and alternate use program.

Until recently, the department has not asserted its jurisdiction aggressively. In mid-July, the department's Mineral Management Services, which controls the mineral rights on federal lands, asserted its jurisdiction over renewable energy projects--wind, wave, solar and tidal energy--on federal waters in the Outer Continental Shelf.

Although the MMS will not finalize regulations for renewable energy projects until the end of this year, projects are moving rapidly through the agency's interim approval process. And there are a lot of projects.

Energy Management, a 28-year-old energy company based in [New England](#), plans to build a 468-megawatt wind power facility off the coast of Massachusetts: the Cape Wind project. The [Long Island Power Authority](#) and FPL Energy have proposed to build a 144-megawatt wind project off the coast of Long Island, N.Y. While the Cape Wind and Long Island projects are further along than other proposals, several other offshore wind-power projects have been proposed for [New Jersey](#), Florida, California, Delaware and New Jersey.

The Cape Wind and Long Island projects are the most developed of any proposals to build wind facilities on the OCS, but a number of other offshore wind power proposals are also in the works.

Perhaps the most ambitious proposal comes from Blue H, which wants to build a 420-megawatt [wind farm](#) off the coast of Massachusetts, roughly two dozen miles from Martha's Vineyard. Blue H, a wind-power company based in Britain, has developed a floating wind turbine based on designs first used by oil-drilling platforms.

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