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Harbor district works to secure funding to build offshore terminal

Pictured is a proposed design for offshore wind development, with the hope to begin construction in 2025. (Mary Bullwinkler/For the Times-Standard)



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The Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District will receive \$8.7 million from the federal government to conduct the relevant studies regarding the offshore wind terminal project.

The \$8.7 million from the Department of Transportation funds all the permits, studies and California Environmental Quality Act-related analyses the district must conduct before any actual construction can happen. The offshore wind terminal would facilitate the creation of an offshore wind farm roughly 20 miles west of Eureka, which in theory would help generate renewable energy for the entire state, though many hurdles remain, such as outdated power transmission lines preventing large-scale power exporting.

“(The grant funds) all of (the studies) unless something comes up that we weren’t expecting. Effectively what this does is get us shovel-ready for construction,” Rob Holmlund, the harbor district’s director of development, said.

The studies include geotechnical analysis, rights of way and topographic surveys, air quality analysis, site investigations for CEQA-related permits, habitat mitigation and a larger master plan.

Holmlund said he anticipates all the studies to be completed by the first quarter of 2025.

While the studies are now fully funded, the remainder of the first phase of the project – roughly \$800 million – is not, though the district submitted a federal grant application that could substantially shore up a chunk of the required cash. If the federal government approves the grant, the district could see a windfall of \$426,719,810.

“Our current plan is, if we win this grant that we have into the federal government and we’ll hear back about that in December or January, if that goes through, our current plan schedule is construction would begin in 2025 and be completed in 2029,” Holmlund said.

Holmlund added that, if all goes well, construction for the actual terminal would begin in late 2026 and see completion in 2029.

Beyond the financials, the offshore wind terminal has a controversial element: the slated developer. Crowley Wind Services is a subsidiary of Crowley Maritime, which is currently being sued for sex trafficking, with two plaintiffs who accuse the company of a culture that ignores sexual misconduct allegations, leading to a moment where both women said they were sexually assaulted by their manager during trips from their workplace in El Salvador to the company headquarters in Florida.

Yurok Tribal Chairman Joseph James wrote an opinion piece in the Times-Standard urging the district to seek another developer, expressing concern over potentially worsening the number of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People in the area.

The district does not currently have conceptual cost estimates for the project’s next phases beyond design and permitting.