

RECHARGE

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'Invaluable asset' | US names DoI official Klein to replace Lefton as chief offshore wind regulator



Klein. Liz Klein to assume director's role at BOEM. Photo: Department of Interior

No reason given for departure of Bureau of Ocean Energy Management head who drove rapid early growth of industry under President Joe Biden

By **Tim Ferry**

President Joe Biden's administration has announced that longstanding Department of Interior (DoI) official Elizabeth Klein has been named chief regulator of offshore wind and other energy development in federal waters.

Klein, who has served during the administrations of former Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, will take over as director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) effective 19 January.

She will succeed Amanda Lefton, who has been in the post since 5 February 2021, two weeks after Biden took office. DoI, parent agency of BOEM, gave no explanation for why Lefton will depart.

"Klein has been an invaluable asset at the DoI since Day One, and we are thrilled she is taking on this new role," said DoI chief of staff Rachael Taylor. She will be "critical to our efforts to meet the President's ambitious goals to deploy affordable clean energy to power homes across America and create good-paying jobs in the growing offshore wind industry."

Lefton spearheaded the Biden administration's massive push towards **30GW of offshore wind capacity in American waters by 2030**.

Under Lefton's leadership, BOEM approved the nation's first two commercial scale offshore wind projects, **Vineyard Wind 1** and **South Fork Wind**, and evolved its approach to offshore wind "to drive towards union-built projects and a domestic-based supply chain", DoI said.

BOEM has held three offshore wind lease auction this year, including a record-breaking sale in the **New York Bight** and the first-ever **floating wind tender** in the US for acreage off the coast of California. These lease sales generated \$5.44bn in federal revenue, representing 971,560 acres.

Lefton also oversaw BOEM's environmental review of 10 offshore wind projects, and advanced additional wind energy areas in the Gulf of Mexico, Oregon, Gulf of Maine and Central Atlantic.

"BOEM is at the epicenter of the DoI's work to create good-paying union jobs in the offshore energy sector, support a reliable domestic supply chain, and meet the moment for a clean energy economy. Amanda [Lefton] has been a driving force of this effort," said Taylor.

Industry advocate American Clean Power Association (ACP)'s head of offshore wind Josh Kaplowitz said, "ACP applauds director Lefton on her service and record of accomplishments helping lay the foundation to achieve the ambitious but achievable US goals."

David Hardy, CEO of Danish offshore wind developer Orsted's Americas region, said, "I commend Amanda for her leadership and commitment to working collaboratively in building a new American industry to advance our clean energy future."

Klein has been a member of the Biden administration since January 2021, serving as senior counsellor to DoI secretary Deb Haaland with an emphasis on water policy and climate change resilience.

"Liz Klein brings strong environmental and government credentials to an important position at a pivotal moment in time," said Stephanie McClellan, executive director of industry advocacy group Turn Forward.

During the Obama administration, Klein served as DoI's associate deputy secretary and was "a key architect" of the Obama administration's early work to create a new offshore wind industry and leasing program, according to DoI.