December 29, 2014

Michelle Morin  
BOEM Office of Renewable Energy Programs  
381 Elden St. (HM 1328)  
Herndon, VA  20170-4817

Re: Docket No. BOEM-2014-0077

Dear Ms. Morin:

The Virginia Offshore Wind Development Authority (VOWDA), an advisory commission to the Governor of Virginia, established under state law, appreciates the opportunity to express its support and thanks for the excellent work that BOEM has done in preparing the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Virginia Offshore Wind Technology Advancement Project (VOWTAP) on the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) offshore Virginia. VOWDA now urges BOEM to proceed with its preferred Alternative A, allowing the development of the VOWTAP to proceed under the terms and conditions agreed to by the parties to the VOWTAP and incorporated in the EA. With the development of the VOWTAP, Virginia and the United States will learn a great deal about the siting of offshore wind turbines and related construction impacts, and hopefully be able to reduce the costs of this important new energy source.

The VOWTAP consists of the installation on the OCS seabed of two six-MW wind turbine generators, the laying of two submarine cables and the construction of a cable connecting the project with existing infrastructure located in the City of Virginia Beach. The wind turbines would be located adjacent to the current Wind Energy Area that is under lease to Dominion Virginia Power. The Department of Energy has also supported the VOWTAP by providing grant support to the project, and cooperated in the preparation of this EA.

VOWDA has provided support for the VOWTAP since the project’s inception in 2012. We are strong supporters of careful development of the OCS for renewable energy and offshore wind. Once construction is complete, the VOWTAP will provide clean energy to many Virginia homes.
and businesses. Offshore wind as a clean source of energy can also help reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to Virginia’s work on reducing the impacts of climate change.

Governor McAuliffe has recently adopted a new energy blueprint for Virginia through his 2014 Virginia Energy Plan (VEP) in which he has supported offshore wind and other forms of renewable energy. The 2014 VEP is available at www.dmme.virginia.gov/DE/2014_VirginiaEnergyPlan2.shtml. VOWDA, as well as the Governor, also recognize the importance of bringing new clean energy jobs to Virginia. The VOWTAP, as well as the development of the entire Wind Energy Area offshore Virginia, will produce many excellent jobs for Virginia citizens. Through thoughtful development of our offshore wind resources Virginia can grow its economy while also protecting the environment.

The EA outlines and carefully analyzes the mostly minor impacts that the VOWTAP will have on other uses of the marine and near shore environment, including marine transportation, archaeological resources, fishery resources, marine mammals and other species and their habitats. We appreciate that BOEM has cooperated with all of the key resource agencies in preparing this EA and taken their considered views and expertise into account in reaching its conclusions on the types of impacts anticipated from the development, construction and eventual decommissioning of the VOWTAP.

For all these reasons, VOWDA urges BOEM to proceed with its preferred Alternative A, allowing the development of the VOWTAP to proceed under the terms and conditions agreed to by the parties to the VOWTAP and incorporated in the EA. With the development of the VOWTAP, we will learn even more about the siting of offshore wind turbines and related construction impacts, and hopefully be able to reduce the costs of this important new energy source for Virginia – and the United States.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important development – one of the first concrete steps to bringing offshore wind to fruition along the Atlantic Seaboard.

Sincerely,

Robert Matthias
Chair, VOWDA

c: Al Christopher, Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy