First U.S. auction of Gulf of Mexico tracts for wind power set for Aug. 29

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The first auction of offshore leases for wind power development in the Gulf of Mexico will take place Aug. 29 for tracts off the Louisiana and Texas coasts, the Biden administration announced Thursday.

The Department of the Interior said the lease sale will involve more than 300,000 acres (120,000 hectares). That includes a 102,480-acre (41,470-hectare) area off the southwest Louisiana coast, and areas covering 102,480 acres (41,470 hectares) and 96,786 acres (39,160 hectares) off Galveston, Texas.

Plans for the sale come as wind energy projects are already taking shape in the Northeast. Earlier this month, the government gave the go-ahead for New Jersey's first offshore wind farm to begin construction. That followed approval of projects now under construction in the northeast, one off Massachusetts and the other off New York and Rhode Island.

"We're going to the Gulf," President Joe Biden said Thursday in Philadelphia. He was there to tour the Philly Shipyard, where there was a steel-cutting ceremony for the Acadia, a vessel that will help to build offshore wind farms.

The administration had said in February that it was considering an offshore lease sale in the Gulf, where industries that traditionally serve offshore oil and gas drilling are also embracing wind energy developments.

The Gulf areas being auctioned next month have the potential to generate 3.7 gigawatts, enough power for nearly 1.3 million homes, the Interior news release said. The administration has set a goal of installing 30 gigawatts of offshore wind energy by 2030.