

Protect Our Coast New Jersey

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PROTECT OUR COAST NEW JERSEY PROVIDES CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

OCEAN CITY, New Jersey—Protect Our Coast New Jersey (POCNJ) submitted testimony to Congressman Jefferson Van Drew's office on the eve of a Congressional field hearing scheduled to take place in Ocean City, Maryland on January 20 at 2:00 PM EST.

Two additional Members of Congress will participate in the hearing-- Andy Harris (MD-01), and Congressman Chris Smith (NJ-04). According to a release about the event, "the hearing will take public testimony from experts in industries affected by offshore wind followed by questions from three Members of Congress whose districts are directly impacted by its harmful effects. The hearing will be conducted as a normal congressional hearing, including expert testimony and questioning."

The hearing will be held at the Roland Powell Convention Center (4001 Coastal Hwy, Ocean City, Maryland). Doors will open at 1:30pm. The event is free and open to the public; however, advance registration is required. For more information, please visit <https://harris.house.gov/media/press-releases/hearing-advisory-congressman-andy-harris-hold-hearing-offshore-wind>

A copy of the testimony submitted by POCNJ to Members of Congress follows below.

Members of the Congressional Field Committee:

Protect Our Coast-NJ (POCNJ) is a 501 (c) (3) all volunteer non-profit organization located in New Jersey. With over 20,000 members, it is the largest grassroots organization in New Jersey devoted to opposing Offshore Wind (OSW) development. We are simply individuals who are independent and nonpartisan who have come together to protect our coastal communities and marine life. We are here today to voice our opposition to OSW and ask that our testimony become part of the record of this hearing. POCNJ is opposed to any and all industrial exploitation of the coastal and marine ecosystem--including, but not limited to, oil and gas exploration and drilling, mining and OSW development.

POCNJ supports clean energy, just not at the expense of our environment. We are a group of concerned citizens who have been forced to come together to protect our oceans and coastal environment because our state and federal governments have failed to do so. Government agencies have neglected to conduct thorough economic and environmental impact studies of the massive, rapid and unprecedented industrial exploitation of the marine and coastal ecosystem. We are concerned the government has failed to take the time to research and consider the impact these major facilities will have on wildlife—including some of the most endangered mammal species on earth.

There are only about 338 critically endangered Right Whales left in the world today. And it is estimated there are only 4349 endangered Sperm Whales remaining in the world's oceans. These highly intelligent mammals possess extensive vocalization, echolocation and hearing ranges of up to 500 miles, and are able to communicate and navigate when ambient sounds are manageable. Unfortunately, the din from ongoing underwater survey work using seismic "sparkers" and sonar is enough to disrupt cetacean species, potentially putting them in the path of large ships. We have witnessed an unusual number of tragic deaths of whales and dolphins during the time period from 2016 until the present when OSW companies have had federal permission to harass or even kill protected marine mammals in their work. The government says there is no evidence of a causal relationship between offshore survey work and these cetacean fatalities; however, there is no scientific evidence to prove they aren't connected. The government simply hasn't done comprehensive studies to prove its narrative on this issue.

We are also concerned that the construction of these OSW facilities will have an irreversible, devastating impact on our coastal communities whose economies and livelihoods depend on a healthy ocean. There are estimates that 15% of the tourist trade along the Jersey Shore will disappear if OSW is constructed. This would amount for at least a \$1 billion hit to the Cape May County economy annually. We are also dismayed at the grave risk posed to the commercial and recreational fishermen along the coast by massive industrial development. A great number of small, family owned businesses are threatened by the prospect of OSW.

Protect Our Coast New Jersey is a 501 (c)(3) designated charitable nonprofit organization that is dedicated to protecting our oceans, our shores, and preserving the views and small businesses that have made the NJ shore a premier vacation destination for over a century. POCNJ is opposed to any and all industrial exploitation of the coastal and marine ecosystem--including, but not limited to, oil and gas exploration and drilling, mining and offshore wind development. Your tax deductible contributions go towards protecting our coast from industrial destruction so that wildlife may thrive and families may enjoy this special place for generations to come. For more information, please visit <https://protectourcoastnj.com/>

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Beyond the coast, the cost of OSW will be borne by tax and rate payers throughout the state of New Jersey and beyond. It is anticipated that OSW facilities will significantly increase electric rates with no impact on global CO2 emissions. According to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, OSW facilities will have little if any collective impact on global warming. The higher utility rates will disproportionately affect those who can afford it the least—blue collar workers and the elderly, many of whom live on fixed incomes. It is estimated that the power from OSW facilities will cost three to four times more than other forms of generation. More importantly, in order to transmit the electricity to the grid, the OSW companies will be digging up the ocean floor to bury thousands of miles of high voltage transmission lines.

There is also evidence that construction and operation of massive offshore wind development would degrade national defense capabilities. We believe further study is warranted in this and myriad other areas, especially in light of the fact the offshore wind leases have been sold to wholly owned subsidiaries of foreign oil and gas interests—including British Petroleum, Électricité de France, Orsted and Shell. Currently, there are more questions than answers as to what happens when one of these foreign owned companies abandons projects under development or decommissions an active industrial wind installation.

OSW development will negatively impact our electric rates, tourism, national security, foreign interests, rights of home rule, fishing, property values, the coastal and marine environment, and quality of life. It will literally change the Jersey Shore forever. Even so, there are officials at the highest levels of government who are foisting this new industry on our communities in fulfillment of arbitrary “green new deal” goals without sufficient research, investigation, and analysis. We believe it is imperative that Congress steps in to help oppose these efforts. It is important that Congress, through its budgetary process, refuse to finance these so-called clean energy programs that give the OSW companies—many of which are foreign oil and gas multinational corporations—additional funds or tax credits to finance their efforts.

Furthermore, we believe that Federal agencies charged with protecting our ocean environment and marine mammals must step up and do their jobs. It is not appropriate for agencies to simply rubber-stamp approvals for the sake of a climate change paradigm, nor is it rational to suggest the installation of OSW skyscrapers off the east coast would affect the global carbon footprint. Despite the biased views of some federal and state officials, no greater good is served by disrupting and destroying the coastal and marine ecosystem. The burden rightly must rest on government regulators to justify their approvals using scientific measures that assure the public that their decisions will benefit the environment and sea life. The United Nations stipulated in 1992 as part of its Earth Summit declaration, “where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.” Congress would do well to make federal regulators heed this advice. Rushing into enormous, costly and risky industrial construction like OSW could be catastrophic and irreversible.

We suggest that Congress develop rules and regulations that would require states to consider these other energy forms before implementing the harmful effect of OSW. We also support efforts to reduce noise pollution in the ocean. It is becoming more evident that sea life is negatively impacted by human activities and noise in the ocean. We suggest Congress set up an ad hoc subcommittee to study the impact noise and other human activity has on sea life.

In closing, we oppose OSW development for the reasons we have outlined above. We appreciate the Committee’s time and effort to consider our views in this matter.

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