

*Congressional Field Hearing
Offshore Wind Turbines
Wildwood Convention Center—March 16, 2023
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Excerpts of remarks by Rep. Chris Smith (R-Manchester)

Special thanks to Chairman Jeff Van Drew for convening this extremely important and timely congressional hearing.

Like the canary in the coal mine, the recent spate of tragic whale deaths has brought new light and increased scrutiny to the fast tracking of thousands of wind turbines off our coast.

Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action, points out in her [testimony](#) today that the National Marine Fisheries Service has said “Offshore wind is a new use of our marine waters, requiring substantial scientific and regulatory review.”

“So, where is the substantial review?” she asks.

Without serious, aggressive, and independent analysis on the ocean altering impact of these projects, they must be paused.

The wind farm approval process has been shoddy at best, leaving unaddressed and unanswered numerous serious questions concerning the extraordinarily harmful environmental impact on marine life and the ecosystems that allow all sea creatures great and small to thrive.

In like manner, the devastating impact on commercial and recreational fishing is largely ignored—one of our witnesses today [Meghan Lapp will testify](#): “we are facing the annihilation of our industry at the hands of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management...”

New Jersey’s amazing shore tourism industry is put a grave risk. [Dr. Bob Stern](#) will testify—the harmful effect of “noise, to whales and to humans.”

During the construction phase, pile driving thousand-foot poles into the seabed will cause catastrophic noise levels.

“What about airborne noise to us? “What will we hear? “Dr. Stern asks. He goes on to note that that the noise level onshore “exceeds the New Jersey residential nighttime standard, causing sleep disturbances...” and that “the operational noise problem is not being addressed by the agencies...”

Offshore wind farms—especially the size of those Governor Murphy and President Biden are forcing on us—are very loud both above and below the sea.

The vulnerability of massive structures the size of the Chrysler Building to hurricanes, nor’easters and superstorms has not been adequately investigated and vetted.

One [Carnegie Mellon University study in 2012](#) found that: “There is very substantial risk that [Category 3](#) and higher hurricanes can destroy half or more of the turbines at some locations.”

Any surface appeal industry or government comparison as to the survivability of ocean wind turbines on the East Coast of the United States to the UK or Norway omits the fact that Europe rarely gets hurricanes.

In January, an article in [Bloomberg](#) with the headline: **Wind Turbines Taller than the Statue of Liberty are Falling Over...Breakdowns of towers and blades have bedeviled manufactures in the US and Europe**, noted that Orsted A/S, the world’s largest developer of offshore wind farms, asked authorities in April to stop maritime traffic near some of its sites after blades fell from one of its turbines off the coast of Denmark...”and that “There’s no publicly available industrywide data on turbine failures...”

Vessel navigation—including U.S. Navy ships, merchant ships and search and rescue operations by the Coast Guard—may be significantly hampered due to radar interference.

The National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine released a report in 2022 entitled: [Wind Turbine Generator Impacts to Marine Vessel Radar](#) and found that wind turbine generators “obfuscate the marine vessel radar for both magnetron-based and solid-state radar... and “can cause significant interference and shadowing that suppress the detection of small contacts...”

The study also found that “wind turbine mitigation techniques for marine vessel radar have not been substantially investigated, implemented, matured or deployed.”

The people of New Jersey deserve better than to have local rule and input categorically dissed as we have already seen in Cape May and Ocean City and Sea Girt in my district will likely be next. Our well-founded concerns—so effectively articulated by our witnesses today and scores of elected officials including 30 shore mayors who signed a letter admonishing a pause—should not be trivialized, mocked or dismissed.

Why the rush to “get it done”? Could it be the massive time sensitive “build it now taxpayer subsidies” from the Biden Administration?

The misnamed Inflation Reduction Act—which all of my Republican colleagues and I voted against—includes a 30% tax credit for offshore wind projects that begin construction before January 1, 2026.

A few weeks ago, I introduced [legislation](#) joined by Jeff Van Drew and Andy Harris to require the U.S. Government Accountability Office—GAO—to investigate the “sufficiency of the environmental review processes for offshore wind projects...of the Mariene Fisheries Service, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and any other relevant Federal agency.”

Among other concerns, GAO would be required to investigate and report to Congress on the impacts of offshore wind projects on:

- Whales, finfish, and marine mammals,
- Commercial and recreational fishing,
- Recreation and tourism,
- Invertebrates,
- Essential fish habitat,
- Benthic resources,
- Cultural, historical, and archaeological resources,
- Sustainability of shoreline beaches and inlets,
- Military use and navigation/vessel traffic.

The GAO would be tasked to reveal how the agencies determine which stakeholders are consulted, whether a timely, comprehensive comment period is provided for local representatives and interest parties, and the estimated cost and who pays for the offshore wind projects.