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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

January 30, 2023

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www.chrissmith.house.gov

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

I am writing on behalf of twelve New Jersey Shore mayors who have sent the enclosed letter “calling for a moratorium on all offshore wind activity until investigations are held.”

I share their concerns regarding the several offshore wind projects under development off the coast of New Jersey, and their requisite impact on recent whale deaths, as well as the potential impacts on the broader environment and the fishing industry.

Accordingly, I request that all work be suspended until such time that ecological safety can be assured.

The New Jersey mayors, local environmental leaders, and members of the fishing community all share a deep concern that four major offshore wind projects have been approved concurrently within the span of two years. That these projects are being built at such a large scale and in such a short amount of time casts doubt over whether there was sufficient time to properly evaluate these projects’ impact on marine ecosystems, fisheries, shipping channels, tourism, and other important factors that may be affected.

As you may know, over the course of the past several months, there have been repeated instances of dead whales washing up on New Jersey’s shoreline, and the proximity of nearby offshore wind development has raised concerns that ongoing activity on these projects may be contributing to whale fatalities.

It was recently reported that, last year, the Delaware Riverkeeper Network raised a concern that construction related to offshore wind was harmful to Atlantic Sturgeon. While at first their review overlooked this concern, NOAA subsequently found new information corroborating this claim. Still, construction continued in the interim, causing undue environmental harm.

Similarly, the lack of conclusive evidence disproving the link between offshore wind development and whale deaths is sufficient enough to require a pause until assurances can be

Co-Chairman of the following: Task Force on Alzheimer’s Disease • Bi-Partisan Taskforce for Combating Anti-Semitism • Lyme Disease Caucus
Coalition for Autism Research and Education • Congressional Pro-Life Caucus • Bosnia Caucus • Poland Caucus • Friends of Ireland Caucus
Congressional Caucus on Human Trafficking • Vietnam Caucus • Congressional Heart and Stroke Coalition • Fragile X Caucus • Spina Bifida Caucus • Hungarian Caucus
Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases Caucus • Hong Kong Caucus • Congressional Pediatric and Adult Hydrocephalus Caucus

made to the public that the environmental and maritime safety of these projects has been properly reviewed.

The reported lack of complete information in the case raised by the Delaware Riverkeepers, coupled with concerns raised by members of the shore community in response to the recent whale deaths, calls into question the sufficiency of the federal review process for the environmental and marine life impact of offshore wind development, specifically in the case of the Atlantic Shores, Ocean Wind 1, Ocean Wind 2, or Empire Wind projects. Therefore, please share with my office a summary of BOEM's actions in overseeing these projects, as well as any and all information submitted to BOEM for the purpose of permitting by the State of New Jersey, Ørsted, Shell New Energies US LLC, EDF Renewables North America, Equinor, and any other relevant recipient of an offshore wind contract, regarding environmental and maritime safety.

The New Jersey Coast is one of our nation's greatest ecological treasures—supporting a wide variety of marine life and a robust and responsible fishing industry. The federal government has a responsibility to ensure its environmental viability, and any projects that may affect not only whales, but the broader marine ecosystem and the economy it sustains, must be comprehensively reviewed before allowed to proceed.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at (202) 225-3765.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Smith".

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress

Cc: The Honorable Liz Klein, Director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management