

Excerpts of remarks by Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ)
in the House of Representatives—March 30, 2023
On his [amendment](#) to HR 1, Lower Energy Costs Act
[Offshore Wind Environmental Review Process Study](#)

Like canaries in coal mines, the recent spate of tragic whale and dolphin deaths and a well-founded suspicion that geophysical surveys including the use of sonar may be a contributing cause, has brought new light and increased scrutiny to the fast tracking of approximately 3,400 offshore wind turbines covering 2.4 million acres by 2030—all embedded into the ocean floor by pile drivers—or floated—in the North Atlantic Planning Area that includes New Jersey’s coast.

The offshore wind industrialization approval process has left unaddressed and unanswered numerous serious questions concerning the potentially harmful environmental impact on marine life and the ecosystems that currently allow all sea creatures great and small to thrive.

Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action, pointed out in [testimony](#) at a field hearing chaired by Jeff Van Drew 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 asked.

My [amendment](#) requires the US Government Accountability Office—GAO—to investigate the “sufficiency of the environmental review processes for offshore wind projects...of the Marine 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
- And the impacts of hurricanes and other severe weather on offshore wind projects.

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

If and when the wind turbines go online, vessel navigation—including US Navy ships, merchant ships, fishing boats, 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 vulnerability of massive structures the size of the Chrysler Building to hurricanes, nor’easters and superstorms has not been adequately investigated and vetted.

Yet, one [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 like manner, the devastating impact on commercial and recreational fishing is largely ignored—one expert, [Meghan Lapp](#) said: “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 being put at grave risk.

With so much at stake—and out of an abundance of caution and concern—support my amendment to require a comprehensive and independent review by the GAO.