



**Testimony of Timothy P. Dillingham
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**Before the
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Energy & Mineral Resources**

**For a Field Hearing Examining the Benefits and Potential Challenges
for New Jersey's Growing Offshore Wind Industry**

September 16, 2019

Chairman Lowenthal, Ranking Member Gosar, and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee:

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to be present here today and speak with you about the benefits and challenges for New Jersey's nascent offshore wind industry. Ensuring that offshore wind in New Jersey contributes to our pressing need to mitigate carbon pollution and climate change, provides the maximum benefits and protections to our ocean ecosystems, coastal communities, and ocean users while minimizing conflicts and challenges associated with developing renewable energy infrastructure in our increasingly busy and invaluable ocean space is no small task. We appreciate the Subcommittee bringing a focus to these questions.

My name is Tim Dillingham, and I am Executive Director of the American Littoral Society (the Society). The Society is a coastal conservation organization based on Sandy Hook, part of the Gateway National Recreation Area. The Society also has an office right here in South Jersey, in Millville, as well as in New York, Massachusetts, and operations in South Florida. The Society is a member-based organization promoting the study and conservation of marine life and habitat, protecting the coast from harm, and empowering others to do the same. Since 1961, the Society has helped people to care for the coast through our advocacy, conservation, and education programs and initiatives. We not only serve as a watchdog and steward for the coast, but also provide passionate and concerned citizens with the information and tools they need to care for the coast with us. We work extensively in collaboration with our colleagues in the conservation and

environmental communities, regionally and nationally, particularly through our Healthy Ocean's Coalition made up of more than 140 groups from across the country.

I appreciate the Committee's interest in this issue and am committed to providing information on what it will take to build an offshore wind industry that will not only help protect our coastal communities from the all-too-real and devastating impacts of climate change, but also protect the long-term health of the ocean ecosystem and planet.

New Jersey, like many other Atlantic coastal states, is pursuing wind energy development as a source of clean and renewable energy to help mitigate the impacts of climate change; impacts like sea level rise and more powerful storms that are already plaguing communities. New Jerseyans are no strangers to the real-world impacts of climate change. Almost seven years ago, Hurricane Sandy devastated our coastline. We were not prepared for a hurricane of that magnitude then and, because of that, the impacts still linger today.

Hurricane Sandy is emblematic of the risks our coastal communities face as our climate changes. We understand that the ocean has absorbed more than 90 percent of the warming that has occurred here on Earth over the last 50 years, which has contributed to sea level rise, among other climate challengesⁱ. These impacts of climate change, which is changing conditions in the ocean faster and more severely than we thought possibleⁱⁱ, require us to move away from greenhouse gas emitting fossil fuels and increase investment in renewable energy sources.

Offshore wind is a viable option for mitigating future climate risks as part of building our clean energy portfolio. Developing offshore wind will alleviate the short and long-term risks from current, destructive practices of fracking and pipelines and safeguard our coast against the Administration's current proposal to open virtually all of the federal waters off New Jersey to offshore oil and gas exploration and development.

It is encouraging to see that a broad coalition of leaders in government, business, labor, environmental protection, and concerned citizens, many of whom are here today, support working toward a renewable energy future, one that includes well-informed offshore wind development.

A recent Monmouth University poll shows widespread, bipartisan citizen support for placing wind farms off New Jersey's coast, with three-quarters of respondents in favor of offshore wind farms and almost 50 percent supporting wind energy as a major priority for New Jersey over the next 10 yearsⁱⁱⁱ. While the support waivers when electricity cost rate increases are added, a majority (58 percent) still said they would support

developing offshore wind energy if rates increased if it would significantly reduce carbon emissions and reliance on fossil fuels^{iv}.

Yet, even with its potential long-term benefits, offshore wind power, like all types of energy development poses risks to its immediate environment and must be developed responsibly.

We believe New Jerseyans need and want offshore wind that's sited and developed with respect for the ocean we love and use. We must work together when deciding where wind farms will be constructed, and at what scale, to ensure they pose minimal risk to the ocean, local communities, and other industries.

Ill-informed siting and construction could eliminate prime fishing areas (See Exhibit A) and ecologically special places by damaging ocean bottom structures, altering open sandy bottom habitats to reef habitats, and shifting existing marine life populations that rely on this habitat. Offshore wind construction and operations could impair whale and bird migrations and displace species from important habitat areas used for breeding and feeding, depending on the particular siting and design. Poor placement of wind farm projects could constrain the state's fishing industry. New Jersey is home to the Mid-Atlantic's top port by landed value right outside these doors in Cape May^v. In 2016, the seafood industry in New Jersey generated \$6.2 billion in sales and \$193 million in landings revenue^{vi}. It's important to note these challenges, not to dissuade development of offshore wind farms, but to call attention to the risks of an exclusive, rushed, or uninformed decision-making process.

I believe we can meet our clean energy needs while protecting our valuable marine wildlife and coastal heritage. As New Jersey develops offshore wind, it is crucial that, going forward, projects are sited outside important and sensitive habitats—like the nearshore environment, shoals, shelf breaks, and other unique and ecologically important ocean areas—to minimize impacts to coastal and marine wildlife and communities. Attached to my testimony as Exhibit B you will find a longer issue brief on wind developed by a partnership of 18 environmental organizations from across the country describing the kinds of places wind developers should avoid, like critical feeding and breeding habitats for the highly endangered North Atlantic right whale.

We must come to terms with the idea that certain areas are ecologically and culturally significant and must be protected and conserved instead of developed. The key lies in finding places where development of wind farms is compatible with protecting ocean habitat and other important traditional and sustainable uses.

That is a process that starts with strong science and involves intensive involvement of all the interests affected.

It is also imperative that Congress, the federal agencies of jurisdiction, and coastal states adopt science-based measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the impacts of wind farm construction and operation on vulnerable ocean life. These impacts include threats associated with initial siting of wind energy areas, underwater noise, ship strikes, possible effects from electromagnetic fields, and turbine conflicts with wildlife. Over 1.7 million acres^{vii} of federal waters off the Atlantic coast are being considered for potential wind farm development, which may cause far-reaching cumulative effects well beyond New Jersey's waters. Appropriate and thorough wind project reviews must utilize the most recent and best available science on potential impacts in addition to solid baseline ecological information on the area under construction and broader region.

Congress must ensure that industry is obligated to further research and long-term monitoring to improve our understanding of their potential impacts so we can address any problems and move beyond concerns that prove to be unfounded.

In addition to protecting special places, New Jersey offshore wind development must also be mindful and representative of all ocean interests. We cannot stress enough the key to fully informed decision-making is robust, inclusive stakeholder engagement. If we're going to invest in offshore wind farms, an accurate reflection of New Jersey's population must have a seat at the table. The ocean is held in public trust and belongs to us all.

Wind projects must, therefore, include regional stakeholder engagement to give people and communities opportunities to be heard. Many ocean users, whose industry and livelihoods are affected by proposed offshore energy development, operate at regional scales. Stakeholder engagement must represent those interests throughout the region. What happens in New York and Delaware can directly impact New Jersey and vice versa. Without broad representation and diverse input there is great potential to lose sight of cumulative impacts from millions of acres of currently open ocean area that will be developed and used in a disjointed way.

Since seeking local knowledge can provide valuable insights for managers and the wind industry, the Society's focus has been on engaging members of the New Jersey recreational and commercial fishing communities. Earlier this year, we hosted a wind forum where 60 members of the New Jersey fishing community held a dialogue with several wind energy company representatives, including Orsted, Equinor, and EDF Renewables/Shell. The goal of the forum was to create an opportunity for engagement

between stakeholders and wind developers. We did this because we noticed a lack of inclusion in the ongoing governmental processes, particularly with recreational fishermen.

In 2016, the New Jersey recreational fishing industry supported 15,400 jobs, generated \$1.8 billion in sales, and accounted for an estimated 4.3 million trips by anglers,^{viii} solidifying anglers as particularly important stakeholders.

To help achieve the twin outcomes of protecting special places and engaging affected and interested communities, the Mid-Atlantic region must re-invest in regional ocean planning. Ocean planning uses a suite of tools, information and processes to examine the entire picture of how we use, manage, and conserve the ocean and coasts. Through enhanced data and stakeholder input, planning can strengthen the protection of ocean and coastal habitats and encourage sustainable ocean practices and recreational opportunities. Using ocean planning as a tool and having all stakeholders participate in the process, we can mitigate unintended consequences while moving these projects forward.

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean, also known as MARCO, is the Mid-Atlantic region's Regional Ocean Partnership with government representation from the states of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. MARCO is incredibly well situated to engage a broad range of ocean interests - including federal agencies, tribes, environmental non-government organizations, recreational fishing enthusiasts, telecommunications and cable industry representatives, members of the maritime sector, and others. The Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management (BOEM) should work with MARCO to bring these stakeholders back to a common table to work on cumulative impacts, site-specific issues, and the entire region's offshore wind activities by way of their historic partnerships. This will require Congress fully authorize and fund MARCO's long-term work on ocean planning.

Re-investing in regional ocean planning will help by bringing stakeholders and experts throughout the Mid-Atlantic together to determine how wind fits into the broader picture of the Mid-Atlantic Ocean space.

In sum, tapping into the wind power off our coasts offers a tremendous opportunity to develop the carbon free energy we need to address climate change. If we embrace the outcomes of protecting special places and engaging stakeholders through ocean planning, everyone can benefit — our ocean, coastal communities, traditional ocean users, ratepayers, and citizens.

The American Littoral Society believes that this is the proper choice to make if conducted through a well-informed and inclusive decision-making process because it is our priority to ensure that New Jersey's waters are sustainably used and healthy — now, and for future generations.

Thank you to this Committee for your work to understand the complexities of this issue. I look forward to the opportunity to engage further on this topic and to answering any questions that the Committee may have for me.

ⁱ LuAnn Dahlman and Rebecca Lindsey, *Climate Change: Ocean Heat Content*. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, *ClimateWatch Magazine* (August 1, 2018), available at <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/understanding-climate/climate-change-ocean-heat-content> (last visited September 12, 2019)

ⁱⁱ Cheng *et al.* (2019). How fast are the oceans warming? *Science* 2019 363 (6243) p. 128

ⁱⁱⁱ Monmouth University Polling Institute, *Monmouth University Poll - New Jersey: Strong Support for Wind Energy*, (April 3, 2019)) https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/documents/monmouthpoll_nj_040319.pdf/ (last visited September 12, 2019).

^{iv} *Id.*

^v National Ocean Economics Program, Top Commercial Fishing Ports, <http://www.oceaneconomics.org/LMR/topPortsResults.asp?selRegions=MA&selStates=34&selYears=2017&selOut=display&noepID=unknown> (last visited September 13, 2019)

^{vi} NOAA Fisheries (2016), *Fisheries Economics of the United States, 2016*. Available at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/content/fisheries-economics-united-states-2016> (last visited September 13, 2019). NOAA defines “total sales” as “the combined value of sales by businesses within the state affected by the seafood industry.”

^{vii} Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (August 2019), *BOEM's Renewable Energy Program Fact Sheet*. Available at: <https://www.boem.gov/BOEM-RE-Programs-Fact-Sheet/> (last visited September 13, 2019)

^{viii} NOAA Fisheries (2016) *Fisheries Economics of the United States, 2016*. P. 108 Available at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/content/fisheries-economics-united-states-2016> (last visited September 13, 2019). NOAA defines “total sales” as “the combined value of sales by businesses within the state affected by recreational fisheries.”