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April 15, 2021

Program Manager
Office of Renewable Energy
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
45600 Woodland Road
Sterling, VA 20166

RE: Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Ocean Wind Project off of Atlantic City

Dear Sirs;

I am writing you this letter to be included as part of the request for public comments for the notice of intent (NOI) for the Ocean Wind project. We provide these comments in the hope that the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) will change course with regard to these ill-conceived projects and the inadequate economic review accompanying them. We therefore strongly oppose the project as currently proposed as the visual pollution of the turbines will have a negative effect on shore rentals.

VRJS is a local, NJ based company that advertises and markets over 1700 vacation rentals along the Jersey Shore from Long Beach Island to Wildwood. Over the last 4 years we have helped arrange over 100,000 "stays" for the owners who advertise with us.

The Ocean Wind project, as currently proposed, with the wind turbines visible from shore, **WILL have a negative impact on tourism**. A number of studies and surveys of persons shown images of turbines, including several sponsored by the BOEM have concluded that significant reductions in rental and tourism revenues, and property values will occur from visible turbines. I bring you attention to the following studies:

New Jersey Global Insight Report, 2008
North Carolina State University Study, 2017
BOEM/University of Delaware Study, 2018
BOEM Viewshed Analysis. 2015
New York State Turbine Exclusion Distance, 2018

Of these studies mentioned above, the North Carolina study found that 55 percent of those surveyed would not re-rent that property if turbines were visible regardless of the degree of visibility or any rental discount offered. It also found that the negative reaction to wind turbines was primarily due to the offshore distance as opposed to the number of turbines. So even just a few visible turbines WILL have a negative effect on tourism.

What does this equate to? New Jersey visitor spending in 2019 was 46.4 Billion, which contributed over 5 Billion in taxes to the State of NJ and 540,500 jobs making it the 6th largest employer in the state (Source: NJ Economic impact of Tourism in NJ 2019) with lodging being the #1 revenue sector.

Breaking out the 4 shore counties from the above figures, the Jersey Shore contributes 22.3 Billion to the overall tourism economy or about half. If the North Carolina study is correct, that 55% of shore vacationers would not return, that would equal a 12.3 Billion dollar ANNUAL loss in tourism revenue and a 1.4 Billion dollar loss of annual tax revenue for the state of New Jersey! We cannot afford or accept this!

It has come to our attention that there IS a BOEM screened and approved lease area, 30 - 57 miles off shore that is bigger, and has more wind capacity. I am referencing the "Hudson South" call area. Locating the wind farm in this area, a minimum of 30 miles off shore, and even with the bigger 12MW turbines, will solve the visual pollution that the current lease area emits, thus saving our Tourism economy which is so important to the state. We strongly urge you to slow this project down and consider relocation of both the Ocean Wind and Atlantic Shore projects to the Hudson South area.

It's just common sense NOT to have those turbines visible from the shore. To us Jersey folks, the Jersey Shore is our Grand Canyon! If you have never seen a sunrise on our shore, I encourage you to get up early one morning and watch one. No two are ever the same. If our horizon was picketed with wind turbines, this sight will forever be ruined. I am sure you wouldn't approve wind turbines on the rim of the Grand Canyon. Please don't ruin our Jersey Shore with them either.

Sincerely,

Duane Watlington
Founder
Vacation Rentals Jersey Shore LLC