

Moving forward with offshore wind projects must stop until the impacts to the ocean, the ecosystem and the communities impacted (ecologically, environmentally and economically), is fully understood and satisfactorily addressed by the communities impacted. These projects are not even underway and, to date, seven dead whales have turned up on the shores of South Jersey and New York. To dismiss that there is a connection, direct or indirect, without a full and complete investigation, between the survey work currently being done off our coast related to these projects and the unprecedented number of dead whales coming ashore in a 40 day period of time and in a concentrated geographic area is nothing short of negligent and reckless.

It is astonishing that these projects have moved along as far as they have without widespread knowledge in the communities. I have spoken with a number of neighbors in our town and the other communities south of Brigantine and found that no one that I have spoken to regarding these projects had any awareness of them until I mentioned it or until the recent whale deaths have been reported. Given the magnitude of these projects, the adverse and material impact to the coastline, the ecological impacts, the economic impacts to the rate payers and tax payers that will inevitably foot the bill for these massive projects and the potential impact on tourism and property values, it is extremely hard to believe that an effective formal public notice process has not occurred and a fair opportunity for community members to have a voice in the industrialization of the coastline has not been afforded. I do understand that some public comment meetings have taken place and I have participated in two of them, one oddly run by Orsted, but the only reason I was aware of these meetings was through a social media group. I would never consider social media an effective or proper public notice process. The point being, as I am sure you are aware, having public comment meetings is only useful if the notice of such meetings is provided in a manner in which all of the community members are notified in an effective manner.

I realize that these wind projects have been mandated at the national and state level but the issues that they present to the local communities, in particular the economic impacts and the material and permanent impact to the coastline and the sea life, demand that the local communities and independent environmental groups (those that have not been funded by Orsted or other wind related organizations) have a voice that is heard and that the process is fully transparent. From my research and understanding of the process to date (and my participation in two comment meetings), I think we have fallen far short of community members having a voice, transparency in the process and a properly conducted permitting process with the benefit of fully completed studies and reports on the environmental and economic impact of these projects. The coastal community members and tax payers of southern New Jersey deserve better than a fast-tracked process cloaked in secrecy. The process I have seen so far provides for what amounts to no effective notice to communities as the meeting are not widely known about and, the public meetings, while an opportunity to voice concern, because of the limited scope of notice, amount to no more than a handful of community members making statements into a public record for a decision and deals that seem to have already been made between state level governmental officials and multi-billion companies.

I have no issue exploring and advancing renewable energy sources but, from everything I have read and, I have read a fair amount at this point, it does not suggest that what is being proposed is in any way the best or most efficient solution to what is a real and substantial issue that we face locally and as a nation. When looking at a simple cost/benefit analysis, it is hard to fathom how anyone, other than those limited parties benefitting economically, could possibly conclude that the benefit of these wind projects could outweigh the real and substantial harm to our coast, the ecology and the coastal communities from both an economic and environmental standpoint, in particular, when the magnitude of the known harms have not even been fully researched, vetted and understood.

I am commenting as I fear for the permanent and material adverse impacts of these projects on these beloved coastal communities of southern New Jersey and their residents.