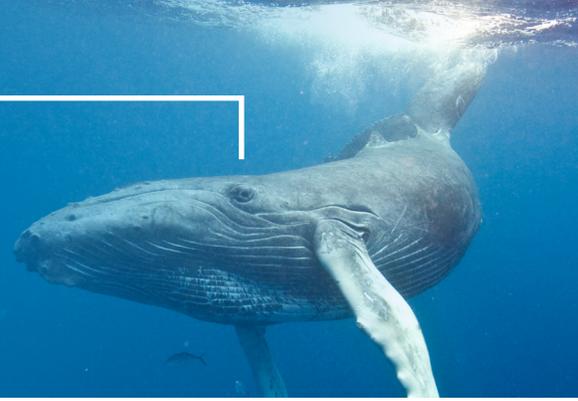


# Offshore Wind is Protecting Whales



There is **no scientific information** connecting offshore wind activities and recent whale strandings.

The offshore wind industry has always been and remains strongly committed to safeguarding the marine environment by taking a number of proactive steps, including establishing and monitoring exclusion zones around vessels, developing the newest mitigation technology, and pausing work during migration seasons.

## Here are the facts:

- **There are no ties between the recent whale deaths and offshore wind development**, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM).
- **Offshore wind vessel activity currently accounts for around 2% of the tracked traffic** in the waters from North Carolina to Southern New England.
- **More humpback whales are returning to these waters.** The humpback population off the coast of New England, New York, and New Jersey is an Endangered Species Act (ESA) success story, having been delisted from the ESA in 2016. Recent NOAA Stock Assessment for the population estimates an annual growth rate of 2.8%.
- **Offshore wind activity presents low risk to marine mammals**, and the industry takes additional steps to mitigate those risks by carefully tracking and monitoring the marine environment, and adjusts activities to minimize the risk to whales.

“ I want to be unambiguous: There is no information supporting that any of the equipment used in support of offshore wind development could directly lead to the death of a whale,” said the Deputy Chief for Permits and Conservation with **NOAA Fisheries Office of Protected Resources**. “There are no known connections between any offshore wind activities and any whale strandings.”

“ Shifting blame [for the recent strandings] on offshore wind development is not only irresponsible but dangerous. Offshore wind is one of the solutions to curb the impacts of climate change on our oceans and marine wildlife,” said the **NJ Sierra Club** Director. **13 environmental non-profit organizations** issued a statement supporting the development of offshore wind projects as a key solution to protecting endangered species.

“ Lead Biologist at **BOEM’s Office of Renewable Energy Programs** stated that none of the surveying work being done now off New Jersey and New York has been shown to seriously harm whales, and noted that “we have no documented cases of [any whale behavioral changes from surveys] actually occurring in the field.”

## Steps the industry takes to mitigate marine mammal risk:

- Operating all vessels under seasonal speed restrictions to protect whales. No other marine sector conducts this level of mitigation and monitoring for marine mammals during vessel transit.
- Establishing “exclusion zones” around survey vessels, monitored by trained protected species observers, to ensure the area is clear of any marine mammals while surveys are being conducted.
- Shutting down survey equipment when marine mammals approach a vessel, and using ramp-up procedures to ensure animals have an opportunity to move away from surveys before they begin.
- Reporting all marine mammal observations to federal regulators, creating a large and valuable dataset that would not be available without offshore wind activity.
- Funding most active real-time monitoring buoys south of Cape Cod, and helping fund initiatives to create the first large [passive acoustic monitoring network](#) for marine mammals on the East Coast.



A **protected species observer** monitors the exclusion zone for species and calls for immediate shut down of survey equipment if marine mammals or sea turtles are detected within the exclusion zone.

### Exclusion Zone

An **exclusion zone** must be established for survey work, where it must be clear of marine mammals and sea turtles for a certain amount of time before survey work can operate.