

Myths & Lies vs Facts

Opponents of offshore wind energy in the U.S. are using misinformation about whales and other environmental concerns to thwart its development, despite extensive studies suggesting minimal impact on marine life. Fueled by dark money groups, opponents perpetuate false claims and seek to undermine the potential of renewable energy sources.

MYTH & LIES: Offshore wind development is responsible for killing and stranding whales.

FACT: There is no link between whale strandings and deaths and the offshore wind industry.

- Critics of clean energy are spreading misinformation, blaming the development of offshore wind projects for a tragic increase in whale strandings.
- According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Marine Mammal Commission, and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) **there is no scientific information connecting offshore wind activities and whale strandings.**
- Experts have been studying an increase in whale deaths since 2016, before the offshore wind industry started working off the Atlantic coast.

Sources: NOAA/BOEM media briefing January 18, 2023; <https://www.mmc.gov/wp-content/uploads/Update-on-Strandings-of-Large-Whales-along-the-East-Coast-2.21.2023.pdf>

MYTH & LIES: NOAA and federal agencies have authorized offshore wind developers to harass and kill whales.

FACT: Offshore wind developers have not applied for, and NOAA Fisheries has not approved, authorization to harm any marine mammals incidental to offshore wind site surveys or construction activities.

- Offshore wind is one of the most regulated maritime industries in the U.S. when it comes to marine mammals and other wildlife – multiple federal and state agencies review every proposed activity and only approve projects subject to a suite of strict protection and mitigation measures.
- NOAA Fisheries does not anticipate and has not authorized any mortality or serious injury of whales for any offshore wind energy development.
- When issuing “incidental take” authorizations, government agencies do not authorize offshore wind developers to cause serious injury or mortality to marine mammals – intentionally or incidentally.

Sources: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/marine-life-distress/frequent-questions-offshore-wind-and-whales#does-noaa-fisheries-authorize-the-death-of-whales-as-it-relates-to-offshore-wind-development>

MYTH: Electric transmission cables from offshore wind projects endanger marine species.

FACT: The electromagnetic field (EMF) emitted by offshore wind transmissions, similar to those already in U.S. waters, never exceeds the strength of the Earth's magnetic field and decreases with distance from the cable.

- This means that it is essentially impossible for the magnetic field itself to be harmful to marine life, studies demonstrate that EMF from transmission cables are comparable to that emitted by everyday household appliances.
- Research is ongoing to inform how wildlife detect and respond to these fields but, at this point, the studies have thus far concluded with reasonable confidence that the EMF levels emitted from offshore wind cables are unlikely to cause significant risk to marine species.

Sources: www.seagrantenergy.org/liaison-updates/effects-and-impacts-of-emf-radiation; <https://tethys.pnnl.gov/sites/default/files/summaries/SEER-Educational-Research-Brief-Electromagnetic-Field-Effects-on-Marine-Life.pdf>

MYTH: Offshore wind is going to kill the fishing industry in the U.S.

FACT: Offshore wind and fishing can coexist. Although offshore wind lease areas encompass tens of thousands of acres, wind turbine structures take up only a small portion of that area.

- With turbine spacing and layouts coordinated with BOEM and the U.S. Coast Guard, leasing areas can continue to be used for many of the same purposes for which they were originally used, such as commercial and recreational fishing, recreational boating, and tourism-related trips.
- New approaches to fisheries' research and monitoring will ensure fisheries' management can adapt to the presence of windfarms. Fisheries' managers can continue to work to maintain yields and food security through adjustment of current management measures such as fishery surveys conducted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Science Centers as windfarms are built.

Source: https://cleanpower.org/wp-content/uploads/gateway/2021/06/ACP_Fact-SheetFisheries-Update_10.28.pdf

MYTH: Offshore wind farms will disrupt ocean currents and harm whale prey.

FACT: According to the study *Oceanographic Effects of Offshore Wind Structures and Their Potential Impacts on the North Atlantic Right Whale and Their Prey*, hydrodynamic effects that occur naturally in the ocean and from climate change are likely to dwarf any possible effects that offshore wind turbines have on the flow of ocean water – and the resulting effects on the availability of prey for the North Atlantic right whale (NARW).

Sources: <https://cleanpower.org/resources/oceanographic-effects-of-osw-structures-and-potential-impacts-on-the-north-atlantic-right-whale/>; <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/27154/potential-hydrodynamic-impacts-of-offshore-wind-energy-on-nantucket-shoals-regional-ecology>

MYTH: Offshore Wind will harm national security by interfering with U.S. Navy sonar and long range (over the horizon) radar

FACT: The Department of Defense (DOD) is involved with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) throughout the offshore wind siting and permitting process—from the initial identification of potential areas for leasing to evaluating specific projects, to recommending measures to avoid and minimize impacts.

- DOD has decades of experience in evaluating potential impacts from land-based wind farms, identifying mitigation measures (including turbine spacing) to ensure DOD can continue to successfully perform its missions, and working with industry where needed to deploy such mitigations with industry paying the bill.
- The DOD Military Aviation and Installation Assurance Siting Clearinghouse acts as a single point of contact for Federal agencies, State and local governments and to facilitate DOD reviews of proposed energy and transmission projects to ensure they do not impinge on national security interests.
- Collaboration between wind farm developers and U.S. military agencies during the planning and construction phases ensures that potential interference issues are addressed proactively. This collaborative approach allows for the identification of measures to resolve DOD concerns early in the development process.

Source: https://windexchange.energy.gov/projects/radar-interference;and https://cleanpower.org/wp-content/uploads/gateway/2021/11/OSW-and-Military-Fact-Sheet_Final_11.15.21.pdf

MYTH: Offshore wind affects tourism and property values.

FACT: Evidence suggests that offshore wind turbines also have minimal to no impacts on property values and encourages tourism.

- Studies show that there are very few negative effects on tourism and property values from offshore wind farms. Instead, tourists are drawn to coastal areas to see these innovative clean energy facilities first hand.
- With new farms come new experiences—and new tourists: sightseeing flights or boat tours, informational centers, and viewing platforms are built, attracting a host of new tourists.
- Most beachgoers say they would be unaffected or positively affected by the presence of offshore wind farms. A survey from the University of Delaware that focused on offshore wind's impact on 1,725 beachgoers' experience found that the impact was minuscule.

Source: <https://cleanpower.org/resources/offshore-wind-benefits-fact-sheet-tourism-and-property-value/>

MYTH: Offshore wind is not economical to develop.

FACT: Despite the economic headwinds of 2023, continuing federal and state commitments to this nascent industry—and the family-sustaining jobs it will bring—make the industry resilient and the outlook optimistic as evidenced by the more than 30 projects moving forward with development.

Source: https://cleanpower.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/OSW_Financial_240223.pdf

Offshore wind fact sheets and additional resources:

- [Offshore Wind: Safeguarding Marine Mammals During Development through Operations](#)
- [Offshore Wind: Protecting Whales](#)
- [Offshore Wind: Clean energy opponents are wrong about whale deaths](#)
- [BOEM: Protecting North Atlantic Right Whales During Offshore Wind Energy Development](#)
- [BOEM & NOAA Fisheries: North Atlantic Right Whale and Offshore Wind Strategy \(Draft\)](#)
- [NOAA Fisheries: Frequent Questions—Offshore Wind and Whales](#)
- [NOAA Fisheries: List of Fisheries Summary Tables](#)
- [Heartl: Permanent threshold shift – See the causes & treatments](#)