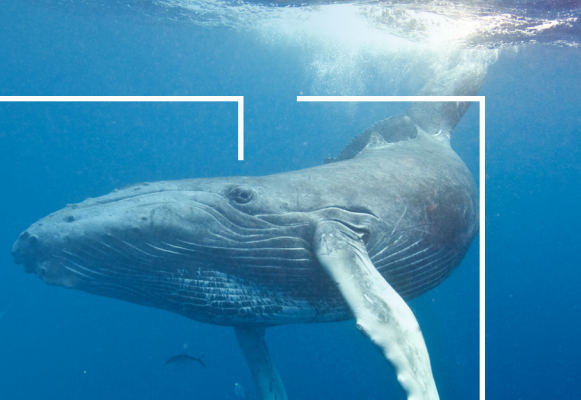
Offshore Wind is Protecting Whales



The offshore wind industry is 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.

There are no known connections between offshore wind activities and recent whale strandings. **Here are the facts:**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) have firmly stated that there are no ties between the recent whale deaths and offshore wind development.

> 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."

Notwithstanding the already low risk to marine mammals from offshore wind activity, the industry carefully tracks and monitors the marine environment for the presence of whales. Some examples include:

- Operating all vessels under seasonal speed restrictions. 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 potentially disruptive sound levels.
- Reporting all marine mammal observations to federal regulators, resulting in a large and valuable dataset that would not be available without offshore wind activity.
- Funding 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.

According to NOAA, an uptick of whale strandings have been occurring annually since 2016.

Offshore wind vessel activity currently accounts for far less than 1% of the total traffic in the waters off New Jersey, New York, and Southern New England.

The Gulf of Maine humpback population 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%.