

NEWS RELEASE



IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 19, 2023

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MURPHY ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES FUNDING FOR OFFSHORE WIND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES, ENTRY INTO RESPONSIBLE OFFSHORE WIND SCIENCE ALLIANCE

(23/P25) TRENTON – The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and New Jersey Board of Public Utilities today announced nearly \$2 million in additional funding for efforts to ensure the safe and ecologically responsible development of offshore wind energy to combat the worsening impacts of climate change.

Projects funded through the state's Offshore Wind Research & Monitoring Initiative (RMI) include deployment of a whale detection buoy, a study to evaluate general species diversity in offshore wind development areas, and another to better understand offshore movement of harbor seals. Funding is also being provided for New Jersey's entry into the [Responsible Offshore Science Alliance](#) (ROSA), a nonprofit organization leading a collaborative effort advancing fish and fisheries research related to offshore wind.

"Development of offshore wind energy is a vital component of the Murphy Administration's work to mitigate and respond to the worsening impacts of climate change," said **Commissioner of Environmental Protection Shawn M. LaTourette**. "These projects will continue to advance the collection of baseline scientific information that will help ensure the responsible development and operation of offshore wind facilities that protect our coastline and its natural resources."

"We are deeply committed to doing all we can to ensure our offshore wind projects are implemented in as ecologically responsible a way as possible," said **NJBPU President Joseph L. Fiordaliso**. "We are excited about the new RMI grants and their ability to assist us in protecting the environment as we move forward to reach Governor Murphy's goal of 11 GW of offshore wind capacity by 2040."

The RMI is a collaborative effort of the DEP and BPU to coordinate research on potential impacts of offshore wind energy development and builds upon extensive work in this area by

federal partners, including the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

As part of the BPU's second wind energy solicitation, Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind, LLC, and Ocean Wind II, LLC committed \$10,000 per megawatt of project-nameplate capacity awarded – a total of about \$26 million – to fund regional research and ecological monitoring. To date, RMI has provided \$8.5 million in funding for offshore wind-related projects.

The awards being announced today include:

- **Deployment and maintenance of a whale detection buoy off the coast of Atlantic City:** The buoy will listen for whales, and detections will be reviewed and used to inform [NOAA's Slow Zones for Right Whales](#) program to mitigate risks associated with vessel strikes and future construction noise. This project will also examine how to best use these data to inform management moving forward, including optimizing the response time of the warning signal sent to vessels and the buoy network along the eastern seaboard, educating stakeholders on the capabilities of this technology, and fostering dialogue about how to implement near real-time acoustic monitoring into wind energy development activities. \$602,135 was awarded to the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute for this project, and the award will be facilitated by the New Jersey Sea Grant Consortium.
- **An Environmental DNA (eDNA) study:** eDNA is a relatively new, non-invasive approach for monitoring species that are protected or otherwise important to maintaining the ecological integrity of coastal waters and are important to New Jersey's recreational and commercial fisheries. Small samples of ocean water will be collected alongside traditional survey methods in and around the wind lease areas, and then processed to identify and quantify organisms that were recently present in the vicinity of the sample collection location. This study will result in data that will contribute to the future assessment of potential impacts of OSW on the diversity of organisms in the waters off New Jersey's coastline during and after OSW construction. \$1.2 million was awarded to Monmouth University to conduct the study.
- **A study to better understand the movement patterns and health of New Jersey's harbor seals, a key predator species:** A robust population of harbor seals spends its winters in the Great Bay area north of Atlantic City, but more data is necessary to better understand how harbor seals use the offshore space where wind energy leases are located. This study will tag and collect baseline health data for harbor seals, such as stress hormones, that should help assess the impacts of future OSW-related activities, including construction and operation, on harbor seals. \$682,890 was awarded to Stockton University and the Atlantic Marine Conservation Society for this study.
- **Membership in the Responsible Offshore Science Alliance (ROSA).** ROSA is a nonprofit organization leading a collaborative effort to advance research and monitoring on the potential effects of OSW on fish and fisheries, resources that have high social and economic value to New Jersey. Supporting ROSA complements New Jersey's membership in the Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative for Offshore Wind (RWSC) and contributes to the greater regional effort to leverage existing and ongoing research, address data gaps, and meet long-term monitoring needs. ROSA provides opportunities for interactions between fishing industry representatives, federal and other state partners,

offshore wind developers, and the public. \$100,000 was allocated for a two-year membership.

In addition, RMI has issued an updated Request for Proposal to deploy archival passive acoustic monitoring equipment to better understand the distribution and habitat use of baleen whale species, including the endangered North Atlantic Right Whale, in the waters along New Jersey's coastline. This project will be part of a larger effort that includes collaboration with nearby state, regional, and federal entities seeking to protect marine mammals as offshore wind farms are developed along the eastern seaboard. The updated RFP will leverage funding towards a greater number of listening devices, prioritizing detection coverage. A future solicitation will be created for regional spatial analyses of whale movement and distribution patterns.

RMI projects are selected to address the short-term highest priority [research needs](#), which were identified and based on input gathered from subject matter experts, stakeholders including a variety of state, federal, fishing industry, and environmental organizations, and the New Jersey Environmental Resources Offshore Wind Working Group.

Providing funding for these projects demonstrates New Jersey's commitment to regional cooperation and will provide important baseline data needed for future assessments of changes to our natural resources resulting from wind farm construction, operation, and decommissioning.

For more information about the Offshore Wind Research & Monitoring Initiative, visit <https://dep.nj.gov/offshorewind/rmi>

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