

New Jersey anglers air concerns that wind farms will negatively impact fishing

The Press of Atlantic City, January 17, 2021

[Link to story on *The Press* website](#)

Can fluke fishing survive wind farms? It was among the worries expressed by roughly 70 New Jersey anglers at a virtual public meeting Wednesday evening hosted by Atlantic Shores, the developer of an offshore wind farm between Atlantic City and Barnegat Light.

The partnership of Paris-based EDF Renewables and gas giant Shell, Atlantic Shores wants to erect turbines on 183,000 acres of a federally designed wind energy area between 9 and 20 miles off the coast. One revolution of a massive turbine is said to spark the power to electrify a house for an entire day. The wind farm is projected to power up to 1.5 million homes through the generation of 2,400 megawatts.

The public was kept on mute during Wednesday's Zoom session. But Atlantic Shores allowed them to submit written questions and comments via a chat function. As officials presented complex charts and graphs laden with statistics (the material has not been published online, and the officials did not allow the Zoom to be recorded), members of the fishing community, and media, supplied a steady stream of input.

"What happens if environmental impact data is found to be unfavorable?" asked Chelsea Rush, of Upper Township. She listed various environmental concerns, including the electromagnetic fields that result from the underground power cables running between wind turbines and between the farm and shore.

Of special concern to both the recreational and commercial fishing communities, EMFs are said to scare away or endanger fish such as fluke, also known as summer flounder.

If fish are seen to be rushing off, the project will "go forward anyway," Rush said, asking, "Why is it a wait-and-see approach?"

Another recreational fisherman put it differently:

"Oh well, fishing will stink here for five or six years. Sorry. But our turbines are staying," said Tony Butch, imagining future apologies by corporate officials. The Evesham, Burlington County, resident spoke in a telephone interview following the webinar.

During the online chat, he had expressed concern over the combined disruptions to fishing from Atlantic Shores and Ocean Wind, a 99-turbine project going forward in an area off Atlantic City.

“We are going to have years and years and years (of construction) between Orsted’s project and (Atlantic Shores),” he wrote. “Great for jobs, but not the millions of fishermen.”

Also tuning into the session was Eddie Yates, the captain of a 60-foot sport fishing boat, the Susan Hudson, out of Barnegat Light. Though muted during the Wednesday meeting, Yates had testified at a congressional hearing on the matter, held at the Jersey Shore in September 2019.

“How does offshore wind energy affect the fishing industry? The answer we get from the wind operators is ‘We won’t fully understand the impacts until the facilities are already built,’” Yates testified then.

Those concerns are being voiced in the face of a movement whose point man is Gov. Phil Murphy. His goal is 7,500 megawatts of offshore wind energy by 2035, enough for 3.2 million homes, according to the state Board of Public Utilities.

Too much too soon is how a noted oceanographer at the University of Rhode Island views offshore wind farm projects in New Jersey and other Northeast states.

“There’s going to be hundreds or thousands of turbines off the East Coast, so it would be nice to understand these effects and how it translates into impacts before they get built,” Emeritus Professor John King has said in published reports. “Right now the government is pushing full speed ahead to get these things built, and I don’t think they really care that much about their impacts. The environmental reviews are being done really fast.”

During the webinar, Atlantic Shores officials assured fishermen the permitting process was, by law, both lengthy and mindful of all stakeholders. A follow-up virtual session is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday.

Permitting manager Paul Phifer said his 20 years’ experience with environmental review has shown that changes do sometimes occur in projects as a result of public input. Phifer did not provide an example.

“In the Construction and Operations Plan we will submit to the federal government, we will include all the necessary information for a proper analysis of the impacts and benefits of our project — information that will be made available for public review and comment,” Phifer wrote in a statement.

He and other Atlantic Shores officials claimed studies have shown that wind farms and fishing can coexist.

“It’s very unlikely that fishing will be affected,” said Jennifer Daniels, development director.

Onboard at Atlantic Shores are two paid consultants acting as liaisons to the fishing community: Capt. Kevin Wark, owner of the Dana Christie, out of Barnegat Light; and Capt. Adam Nowalksy, who operates the Karen Ann II, out of Atlantic City.

Someone who is both a fisherman and a government consultant, and not involved in Atlantic Shores, offered a general endorsement of the review process for offshore wind projects in the Northeast.

“All the developers are required to consult with fishermen and to take input regarding their projects,” said Capt. Tony DiLernia, who has been contracted by the New York State Research Development Authority. “Our democracy depends on involvement of the affected citizenry.”

South Jersey waste managers learning to adjust to changing recycling parameters, increasing costs

The Press of Atlantic City, December 28, 2020

[Link to story on *The Press* website](#)

https://pressofatlanticcity.com/news/local/new-jersey-anglers-air-concerns-that-wind-farms-will-negatively-impact-fishing/article_beef91bbe490-515b-9106-4cd18927d4a4.html