

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 181

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 20, 2023

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman GERRY SCHARFENBERGER

District 13 (Monmouth)

Assemblywoman VICTORIA A. FLYNN

District 13 (Monmouth)

Co-Sponsored by:

**Assemblymen McClellan, Simonsen, Assemblywoman Dunn,
Assemblymen Space, Wirths, Rooney, Assemblywoman Matsikoudis,
Assemblymen Sauickie, Clifton, DiMaio, Bergen, Assemblywoman
DeFuccio, Assemblymen Torrissi, DePhillips, Auth, Peterson, Catalano
and McGuckin**

SYNOPSIS

Urges immediate moratorium on sonar testing and wind turbine mapping due to recent unexplained deaths of marine life off the coast of New Jersey.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/15/2023)

AR181 SCHARFENBERGER, FLYNN

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- 1 **AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION** urging an immediate moratorium on
2 sonar testing and wind turbine mapping off the coast of New
3 Jersey.
4
- 5 **WHEREAS**, There are multiple offshore wind energy projects under
6 development off the coast of New Jersey; and
7 **WHEREAS**, On March 6, 2023, the Board of Public Utilities decided to
8 solicit applications for even more offshore wind energy projects;
9 and
10 **WHEREAS**, Development of these offshore wind energy projects has
11 resulted in the increased use of sonar and other underwater mapping
12 technologies; and
13 **WHEREAS**, The increased use of sonar and other underwater mapping
14 technologies has the significant risk of interfering with marine
15 mammals' ability to hear, communicate, and navigate underwater;
16 and
17 **WHEREAS**, At the same time, there has been an unusual and significant
18 increase in the number of deaths of whales and dolphins off the
19 coast of New Jersey; and
20 **WHEREAS**, Since December 1, 2022, the National Oceanic and
21 Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has recorded at least twelve
22 deaths of whales off the coast of New Jersey, eight of which have
23 been humpback whales; and
24 **WHEREAS**, In addition to whales, there were at least five recorded
25 deaths of dolphins in February 2023 alone; and
26 **WHEREAS**, The deaths of these whales and dolphins are largely
27 unexplained and remain under investigation; and
28 **WHEREAS**, Nevertheless, these whale and dolphin deaths occurred in
29 or near areas of offshore wind energy development; and
30 **WHEREAS**, The multiple and unprecedented occurrence of whale and
31 dolphin deaths in or near areas of offshore wind energy
32 development may be more than coincidental and warrants
33 investigation by the State and federal governments; and
34 **WHEREAS**, Numerous residents, businesses, environmental groups,
35 and elected officials along the coast of New Jersey have expressed
36 strong concern regarding the connection between this State's
37 offshore wind energy projects and the recent unexplained deaths of
38 whales and dolphins; and
39 **WHEREAS**, Notwithstanding the salutary benefits offered by renewable
40 offshore wind energy, the development of these projects should not
41 come at the expense of marine life; and
42 **WHEREAS**, The development of offshore wind energy projects off the
43 coast of New Jersey should therefore be paused while further
44 scientific study of these projects' impact on marine life is
45 conducted; and
46 **WHEREAS**, The Department of Environmental Protection and the
47 federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management within the U.S.

1 Department of the Interior are the agencies primarily charged with
2 regulating these offshore wind energy projects; now, therefore,

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4 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the General Assembly of the State of New
5 Jersey:

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7 1. The General Assembly of the State of New Jersey urges the
8 Department of Environmental Protection and the Bureau of Ocean
9 Energy Management within the U.S. Department of the Interior to
10 impose an immediate moratorium on sonar testing and wind turbine
11 mapping off the coast of New Jersey, due to the recent unexplained
12 deaths of whales and dolphins off the coast of New Jersey.

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14 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
15 shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly to the
16 Governor, the Commissioner of Environmental Protection, the
17 President of the United States, and the U.S. Secretary of the
18 Interior.

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STATEMENT

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23 This resolution urges the State and federal governments to
24 impose an immediate moratorium on sonar testing and wind turbine
25 mapping due to recent unexplained deaths of whales and dolphins
26 off the coast of New Jersey.

27 Since December 2022, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
28 Administration (NOAA) has recorded at least twelve whale deaths
29 off the coast of New Jersey, eight of which have been humpback
30 whales. In addition, there were also five deaths of dolphins
31 recorded in February 2023 alone.

32 Most of these deaths remain unexplained, but have occurred in or
33 near areas of offshore wind energy development. Given the
34 unprecedented number of these recent deaths, their occurrence in or
35 near areas of offshore wind energy development may be more than
36 coincidental and warrants State and federal investigation.

37 A possible cause of these deaths is the increased use of sonar and
38 other underwater mapping technologies for the development of
39 offshore wind energy projects, which may interfere with marine
40 mammals' ability to hear, communicate, and navigate underwater.

41 Therefore, an immediate moratorium on sonar testing and wind
42 turbine mapping for these offshore wind energy projects is urged, so
43 that further scientific study of these projects' impact on marine life
44 can be conducted.