

# SENATE RESOLUTION No. 120

## STATE OF NEW JERSEY 220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 8, 2023

**Sponsored by:**

**Senator DECLAN J. O'SCANLON, JR.**

**District 13 (Monmouth)**

**Senator EDWARD DURR**

**District 3 (Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem)**

**Co-Sponsored by:**

**Senators Testa, Corrado, Holzapfel, Pennacchio, A.M.Bucco, Schepisi and  
Bramnick**

**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)**

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

1       **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate of the State of New Jersey:*

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3       1. The Senate of the State of New Jersey urges the Department of  
4       Environmental Protection and the Bureau of Ocean Energy  
5       Management within the U.S. Department of the Interior to impose  
6       an immediate moratorium on sonar testing and wind turbine  
7       mapping off the coast of New Jersey, due to the recent unexplained  
8       deaths of whales and dolphins off the coast of New Jersey.

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10      2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,  
11      shall be transmitted by the Secretary of the Senate to the Governor,  
12      the Commissioner of Environmental Protection, the President of the  
13      United States, and the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

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STATEMENT

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18      This resolution urges the State and federal governments to  
19      impose an immediate moratorium on sonar testing and wind turbine  
20      mapping due to recent unexplained deaths of whales and dolphins  
21      off the coast of New Jersey.

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

27      Most of these deaths remain unexplained, but have occurred in or  
28      near areas of offshore wind energy development. Given the  
29      unprecedented number of these recent deaths, their occurrence in or  
30      near areas of offshore wind energy development may be more than  
31      coincidental and warrants State and federal investigation.

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

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