

A Statement from Newport Fishermen's Wives

June 2, 2022

The Newport Fishermen's Wives is a non-profit corporation consisting of wives, mothers, daughters, friends and community members with a common goal: supporting the industry and the people who deliver sustainable, high-quality seafood, the safety of our fishing community, their families and the United States Coast Guard (USCG). Unlike people who are outside of the industry, we have a clear vision of what commercial fishing is. Very simply, it is about families feeding families. The majority of fishing vessels are actually small, independently-owned businesses, often run by multi-generational fishing families who engage in the dangerous, demanding work that brings seafood to shore. In return, the seafood industry provides a livelihood to fishing crews, to people who work in processing, and to those in the countless trades and businesses that support commercial fishing. In addition to feeding families, fishing feeds our coastal economies in Oregon and beyond.

Newport Fishermen's Wives are deeply committed to the safety, productivity, and longevity of our fleets and the waters they fish and we have grave reservations about the proposed wind farms off Oregon's central and southern shore. There are countless questions and concerns about how the placement of floating wind turbines would impact these prime fishing grounds and our ocean ecosystem. There are far too many unknowns and, with a flawed permitting plan that puts environmental and economic assessment at the end of the process, it is unlikely we will get any answers in a timely manner, if at all.

Our organization is known for its passionate commitment to protecting the lives of fishermen. If these wind turbines are placed in the proposed areas, how will that impact the safety of our fishing crews? There are unanswered questions about the impacts on navigational radar, but it is well documented that radar responds to metal. Will the USCG search and rescue crews be able to find a boat in distress if there are hundreds of metal obstructions that may interfere with their radar capabilities? And how is the timeliness of emergency response impacted when 200 turbines stand between a crew in crisis and the USCG, when time is of the essence and hypothermia sets in within minutes. And when weather or ocean conditions demand a speedy return to shore, what happens when captains have to navigate out of their way to avoid a floating wind farm? The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) cannot answer these questions and we have little faith that the energy interests that develop these sites, most likely foreign-owned companies, will put the safety of our family members at the top of their profit-driven priority list.

We find it extremely unsettling that there are currently no floating offshore wind farms operating in the United States. How can BOEM make any assurances when this technology is completely untried here, considering the Pacific ocean's harsh conditions? It is a roll of the dice.

We know all too well the dangers presented by the Pacific and the wrath of our winter storms. We are not willing to see our family members put in harm's way by BOEM's pursuit of a high-stakes experiment. We are not willing to see fishing grounds lost and with them the livelihood that has supported generations of Oregon fishing families. Our communities are not willing to trade a productive, sustainable economic driver on the hope of something that might work or might not.

The Newport Fishermen's Wives urges BOEM, the Oregon Department of Energy, and the Oregon governor and legislature, to declare a moratorium on floating wind farms off the Oregon coast until extensive research and testing can be done to understand the risks and impacts that will result from displacing a successful industry, a valuable protein source and countless industry support businesses in pursuit of one that is dangerously unknown.