

# Offshore Wind: A Balancing Act

When viewed as a balancing act, the debate over offshore wind isn't even close. Climate change is a far bigger threat to our way of life than a bunch of windmills more than a dozen miles offshore.

You don't need to be a scientist to know that the weather is getting more severe and environmental disasters more frequent. Here in Rhode Island, the shoreline is eroding at an alarming rate and violent storms are flooding basements and roads on a regular basis. Last summer, smoke from distant wildfires turned our blue summer skies into a choking brown haze.

So let's put the arguments on a scale:



## Yes to Wind

- \* 10,000 jobs
- \* 2 million homes powered by clean energy
- \* Stabilized electric rates
- \* Lower electric rates by 2030
- \* Reduced dependence on foreign oil  
(improves the economy and national security)
- \* Environmental justice  
(reduced pollution in poor neighborhoods)
- \* Reduced destruction caused by climate change
  - flooding
  - beach erosion
  - air quality
  - violent storms
  - wildfires
  - ocean warming which kills marine life

## No to Wind

- \* Impact on commercial fishing
- \* Uncertainty
- \* Views

(see reverse side)

# The Downsides

**While the methods and much of the evidence used by offshore wind opponents is suspect, they do have a few legitimate concerns.**



## 1) Fishing

The fishing industry will be affected by wind turbines. Although recreational and most types of commercial fishing will be fine, the turbines may pose a problem for boats that tow gear such as scallop draggers and net trawlers.

It is important to note, however, that ocean warming caused by climate change has already wiped out the lobster industry in southern New England and is a major threat to most marine species.

What is NOT TRUE is the assertion that the government doesn't care about fisherman. In response to the legitimate concerns of fishermen, government regulators have:

- \* Reduced the number of Revolution Wind turbines from 100 to 65.
- \* Banned turbines from the most sensitive areas of Coxes Ledge.
- \* Dramatically restricted construction dates to avoid spawning seasons.
- \* Limited vessel speed to protect whales and sea turtles.
- \* Required developers to cease construction whenever a marine mammal is in the area
- \* Rerouted cable paths to avoid critical areas
- \* Required developers to establish a compensation fund for fishermen who lose income.
- \* Required sound barriers during pile driving operations
- \* Designated the entire area of offshore wind as a "Habitat Area of Particular Concern" to create added scrutiny for all development activity.



## 2) Uncertainty

Opponents contend that we don't know exactly how wind turbines will affect the marine environment. This is true. But delay and further study won't change that. There is always some level of uncertainty when man interacts with the marine environment, whether it's building a bridge, constructing a seawall. The impact offshore wind might have on fish stocks pales in comparison to the damage already done by decades of industrialized overfishing.

Yes, there is uncertainty. There always will be. The one thing that is certain is that if we continue to rely on fossil fuels, we are going to do irreparable damage to the things we love the most.



## 3) The View

Yes, there will be lots of turbines out there—way out there. They'll be tall, but they'll also be 12 to 30 miles offshore. On a clear day, the closest turbines will be visible on the horizon and in a typical summer haze, they will be invisible from our beaches.

We wish those turbines didn't have to be out there. But we also wish coal and gas plants weren't belching toxic exhaust into the air and climate change wasn't destroying the natural world we love so dearly. Life is about compromise—and we have to choose which course of action is preferable.