

The Impacts of Offshore Renewable Energy Projects on Marine Ecosystems

Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC)
URI Coastal Resources Center/Rhode Island Sea Grant
Rhode Island Natural History Survey
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Symposium Goal

As Rhode Island explores the potential for offshore renewable energy projects, the challenge emerges to better understand how ocean development impacts marine ecosystems and what steps can be taken to ensure projects answer economic and environmental needs. Against the backdrop of 1) The CRMC Ocean Special Area Management Plan (SAMP), a state effort to develop a management plan for the use of ocean resources, and 2) The Survey's ongoing initiative to support community understanding of ecosystem science, this two-day symposium will:

- Examine how offshore wind farm infrastructure could affect – both positively and negatively – marine wildlife including, marine mammals, fish, turtles, and bird populations and their habitats;
- Provide a forum for Rhode Island stakeholders to ask specific questions about offshore renewable energy projects on marine ecosystems;
- Engage the group in opportunities to discuss possible solutions for achieving viable and balanced economic, environmental and social resources within the context of ocean development.

Symposium Overview

This event will be targeted to a public audience interested in understanding offshore wind farms and how they operate, what the impacts are of these developments on marine animals and ecosystems, and what can we learn from other coastal communities and ocean ecosystems already impacted by and living with wind farms.

Possible Topics to Cover:

- What happens to marine animals and the environment when a wind farm is introduced?
- What happens to wildlife during construction, operation, and eventual demolition?
- What benefits and challenges to wind farms pose to marine ecosystems?
- What has been the impact of the fishery resources when a wind farm is constructed?
- How does the behavior of marine mammals change with a wind farm in the area?