

Frequently Asked Questions: Whales and Offshore Wind Development

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FAQs!



Developed by New York State's Environmental Technical Working Group

Recent whale strandings off the U.S. East Coast have received media attention and led to the spread of misinformation about the effects of offshore wind (OSW) development on whales. Despite a growing narrative to the contrary, there is no evidence that OSW has contributed to any of these mortalities. To help ensure the public receives accurate information about the interactions between OSW and whales, the New York Environmental Technical Working Group (E-TWG; <https://www.nyetwg.com>) convened subject matter experts to develop science-based responses to [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#).

FAQ Topics



Who are these FAQs for?

The E-TWG's FAQ resources are primarily a resource for stakeholders who communicate directly with the public and receive questions related to wildlife and offshore wind development. They provide scientifically accurate answers at varying levels of detail. High-level responses are accessible for a general audience, but there are also detailed summaries of technical results from scientific literature. End users may adapt the information in FAQ resources as needed. We include a [glossary of terms](#), [communications toolkit](#), [graphics](#), and [links to other resources](#) to help with this process.

How are these FAQs developed?

The committee developing FAQ responses includes representatives from environmental nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, state agencies, and offshore wind energy developers. Responses are developed using a multi-stage review process with input from scientific support staff, committee members, E-TWG members, and external experts in relevant fields.

See reverse for the full list of FAQs!

Anthropogenic Impacts on Whales

- How is climate change affecting large whales?
- Are whale and prey distributions changing? If so, why?
- What factors influence vessel strike risk for large whales?
- What are the effects of anthropogenic sound on marine mammals?
- How does sound produced from offshore wind development compare to other industries?



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Strandings and Unusual Mortality Events

- What are strandings and Unusual Mortality Events?
- What are some of the causes of stranding events for marine mammals?
- What are the drivers of recent humpback whale strandings on the U.S. Atlantic Coast?
- Why are baleen whales dying in the Northwest Atlantic – is this a new phenomenon?
- What can we learn from stranding data?
- What are the biases or limitations of stranding data?
- How and when are Unusual Mortality Events considered open or closed?
- How are necropsies conducted?
- Who funds necropsies?
- Are necropsy reports publicly available?

Offshore Wind Development Process

- What are the major components of an offshore wind farm?
- What are the potential effects of offshore wind development on whales?
- Does offshore wind energy development kill whales?
- How much vessel activity is expected from offshore wind development and what does that mean for strike risk to whales?
- What are the effects of electromagnetic fields from offshore wind development on marine mammals and their prey?

Marine Mammal Research and Monitoring

- How do scientists study whales?
- What are the risks and benefits of tagging whales?
- How do marine mammals experience sound differently from humans?
- What are Protected Species Observers and what data do they collect about marine mammals?
- Can publicly available data and reports from Protected Species Observers help improve our understanding of marine mammal populations?
- What marine mammal-related monitoring is conducted by offshore wind developers and what resulting data are public?

Offshore Wind Regulatory Processes and Mitigation

- What federal and international environmental laws protect whales?
- What is “take”?
- What kinds of marine mammal harassment from offshore wind development can be authorized under the Marine Mammal Protection Act?
- What mitigation measures are available to avoid or minimize offshore wind effects on marine mammals?
- What mitigation measures are required by regulators in the U.S. for offshore wind?
- What marine mammal-related permits, approvals and authorizations do offshore wind developers get?
- Do federal agencies consider cumulative impacts of multiple offshore wind leases when granting permits relevant to marine mammals?

