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Most in New Jersey Don't Want Phil Murphy's Offshore Wind Farms

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FILE PHOTO: A construction barge and crane float next to the first jacket (C) installed to support a turbine for a wind farm in the waters of the Atlantic Ocean off Block Island, Rhode Island July 27, 2015. REUTERS/Brian Snyder/

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ—Support for the development of offshore wind turbines in New Jersey has seen a significant decline, particularly in coastal areas, according to a recent poll by the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University. While 50% of New Jersey residents still support the state's initiative to build wind turbines off the coast to generate electricity, this number represents a 30 percentage point drop from 2019 when support was at 80%.

Residents of coastal communities show the steepest decline in support, with only 33% currently in favor compared to 77% four years ago. The main concerns cited include potential harm to marine life and the obstruction of ocean views.

The U.S. Interior Department approved the Ocean Wind 1 project last July, which includes the construction and operation of 98 wind turbines and up to three offshore substations.

That project came to a halt when the vendor bailed on New Jersey.

Following a decision by its Board of Directors, Ørsted ceased development of the Ocean Wind 1 and Ocean Wind 2 projects (1100MW project and 1148 MW projects). The projects have experienced significant impacts from macroeconomic factors, including high inflation, rising interest rates and supply chain constraints, particularly a vessel delay on Ocean Wind 1 that considerably impacted project timing.

Statewide, 72% of residents express concern about climate change, with 51% emphasizing the importance of state action to combat it. Yet, there are mixed feelings about the benefits of renewable energy such as wind power, with 52% believing it will improve the climate. However, less than half of the respondents think it will positively impact local job opportunities, energy costs, or the reliability of electricity. Additionally, 48% oppose tax breaks for companies building wind turbines.

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Concerns about the impact of wind turbines on ocean views and marine life are notable, with 71% believing turbines will affect views and 68% concerned about impacts on marine life. Tourism impacts are also a concern, with 55% believing that turbines will affect shore tourism either a great deal or somewhat.

These findings highlight the complex balance between environmental initiatives and local economic and aesthetic concerns, particularly in regions directly impacted by such projects.