

Protecting Whales and Leading with Science in the Climate Fight

Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind is proud of our work to responsibly develop a domestic clean energy source that helps combat one of the biggest threats to marine life – the warming of our oceans as a result of climate change.

Being a safe and responsible operator working on the water is our highest priority and we take this role seriously.

As the developer of the largest clean energy project in New Jersey, Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind will be a major contributor in accelerating the clean energy transition. Offshore wind development is done in conjunction with responsible environmental protection, and we work closely with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management (BOEM) to ensure our activities mitigate any potential harm to marine mammals in our survey areas.

Atlantic Shores is built on a commitment to four core values: **be safe, be a good neighbor, be a good steward of the environment, and lead with science.**

Atlantic Shores has completed more than 35 environmental assessments to date, with additional reports underway. These include studies and data collection on the abundance and distribution of marine mammals and their use of the habitat in our project areas. These studies are combined with digital aerial surveys to document the baseline of marine mammals in our project areas. Combined, these efforts support state and regional research investments Atlantic Shores is making to advance detection technologies of marine mammals and to inform monitoring that will be required as our projects get closer to construction and operation.

To better understand our lease areas and any potential effects to marine mammals, we work with independent organizations and higher educational institutions, including Rutgers and Stockton Universities. Atlantic Shores' investments also expand broadly into ocean data collection. Combining

innovative detection and mapping technologies with marine mammal field observations helps us to gather and share data with stakeholders, communities and regulators that will help to improve both the monitoring and conservation of marine species off New Jersey's coast. **Atlantic Shores also deploys mitigation measures including the use of equipment shut-down zones and as well as formally trained, NOAA approved, third-party protected species observers on every vessel who are responsible for visually observing and listening for marine animals.**



Images Courtesy: RPS PSO Group

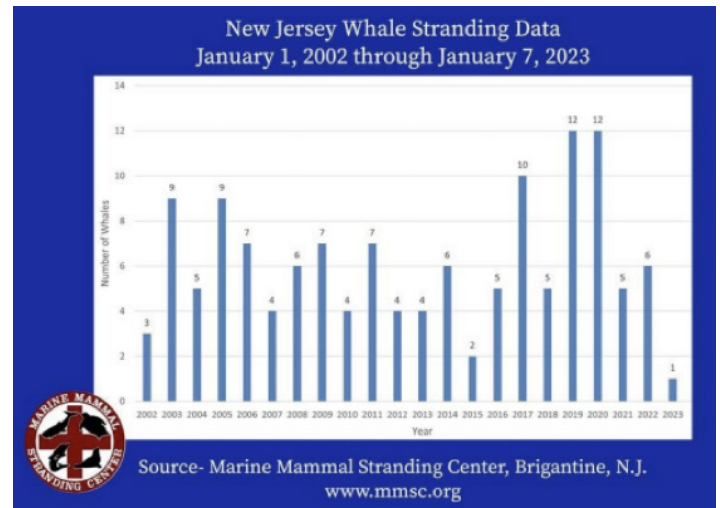


RPS' Passive Acoustic Monitoring (PAM) Operator, Keishan Ramsaran, is conducting acoustic monitoring from the PAM Station onboard the Fugro Brasilis during 2020. PAM Ops are onboard to listen for whistles, clicks, and moans which are signature sounds of marine mammals in the area. They utilize the programs to implement mitigation protocols during times of reduced visibility, such as at night or during fog.

These protected species observers are degreed biologists deployed by third-party organizations who undergo certification programs that are highly regulated by the National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) and by BOEM. The mandate of a protected species observer is to visually and or acoustically monitor marine protected species and to document those encounters. The incredibly valuable data collected by protected species observers is submitted to regulatory agencies including BOEM and NMFS.

Protected species observers are mandated as part of geophysical survey work; however **Atlantic Shores has gone beyond this mandate by utilizing third-party, independent protected species observers even when not federally required**, including on our geotechnical and benthic surveys. This extra measure ensures we capture the most robust, accurate and comprehensive data regarding marine mammals.

ally, the United Kingdom which has 2,652 offshore wind turbines, offshore wind has shown no connection between whale deaths and offshore wind.



 **Did you know?**

- Protected species observers have full authority to immediately cease survey operations to avoid potential harm to marine mammals if they enter the exclusion zone and all detections are recorded and shared with NOAA in (near) real-time.
- Atlantic Shores operates two research vessels off the coast of New Jersey. **These boats do not utilize Sonar systems other than those typical for navigation.**
- Our survey teams have logged more than 1 million staff-hours over the course of 1,500+ workdays with zero adverse whale interactions, and zero incident or injury to any marine mammals.**
- Our crews have diverted twice to support emergency calls for mariners in distress, and once stood down for hours while our crew assisted the rescue of a turtle with a bucket on its head.**

Beached whale incidents are tragic, however, there is no evidence that whale strandings have any connection to offshore wind activity in New Jersey, which have largely been limited to surveys off the coast that are conducted with stringent safeguards in place to minimize the potential for interaction with marine mammals.

As a responsible developer, we will continue to work alongside stakeholders to grow our clean energy economy and invest in research efforts to better understand our natural environment and share that data with others, while working to protect our valuable natural resources, including marine mammals.

NOAA Fisheries has stated no whale deaths have been attributed to offshore wind activities. In February 2023, the U.S. Marine Mammal Commission reiterated, "Despite several reports in the media, there is no evidence to link these strandings to offshore wind energy development."

According to the Marine Mammal Stranding Center in Brigantine, New Jersey, marine mammal stranding rates fluctuate annually, with some years having higher rates of strandings than others. In fact, NOAA Fisheries has been monitoring unusual mortality events for humpback whales going back to 2016 and stretching from Maine to Florida. Internation-



For more information about our survey vessel operations, subscribe to the weekly newsletter called the Mariner Activities Update published by our fisheries liaisons and industry representatives.

atlanticshoreswind.com/mariners/



For more about interactions between offshore wind energy projects and whales on the East Coast, visit NOAA Fisheries.

fisheries.noaa.gov/