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Majorities of US coastal residents see offshore wind as essential for climate and jobs: survey

Stephanie McClellan, Turn Forward. Photo: Turn Forward



Opinion poll by industry advocates Turn Forward and Climate Nexus finds support for the sector across the political spectrum

By **Tim Ferry**

Offshore wind enjoys broad bipartisan support from residents on all three US coastlines as a source of clean, reliable energy and jobs creation, a new survey by industry advocacy group Turn Forward and Climate Nexus found.

Focused on residents in states along the nation's Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf of Mexico coastlines which are slated for massive offshore wind development, the survey found majorities of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents supported the sector, even in counties where construction activities will eventually occur.

"This poll shows that the American people see how essential this clean energy resource is," said Stephanie McClellan, executive director of Turn Forward.

"Offshore wind energy is becoming an economic driver in the US, one that can deliver tens of thousands of good-paying jobs, boost local economies and create a more reliable and equitable energy system," she added.

The results follow a tumultuous year for the industry as surging inflation and interest rates forced project cancellations and offtake contract renegotiations.

A spate of whale strandings widely blamed on the offshore wind industry by committed opponents also fuelled public opposition in the Mid-Atlantic and New England.

Public outcry from New Jersey's Cape May County **proved pivotal to Orsted's moved to cancel 2.25GW of contracted capacity** for the state, and opinion polls last year by Fairleigh Dickinson University and others found declining support for the sector despite strong support from governor Phil Murphy.

Some 65% of coast residents support the Biden administration's goal of building enough offshore wind energy to power 10 million homes by 2030, while 59% agree that the government should sell more leases to expand sector development.

The administration is targeting 30GW of installed offshore wind capacity in US waters by 2030, which it says will create some 80,000 jobs and spur billions in investment.

Coastal residents "want the industry to continue to grow and deliver for their local communities," said McClellan.

The Northeast US is the centre of the sector, with over 12GW of contracted capacity and two projects – the 800MW Vineyard and 132MW South Fork – already partly constructed and sending power to regional grids.

Federal coastal energy regulator Bureau of Ocean Energy Management auctioned acreage facing California's coastline holding some 7GW of potential capacity in 2022, with development activities already underway. California is targeting 25GW of floating wind by 2045.

The US Gulf is already the hub of the offshore oil & gas sector and with one offshore wind lease already sold and another auction slated for this year, looks to continue to leverage its supply chain for the new industry.

The new poll found "more than twice as many coastal county residents prefer offshore wind development over oil and gas development," Turn Forward said.

The advocacy groups did not include the size of the poll or the margin of error.