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Wind projects

Continued from Page A1

Murphy," she said. "Hopefully as more is understood there will be some more caution but as it is right now the (state and federal) agencies are very enthusiastic."

Murphy has set lofty goals for offshore wind energy. The state's 2024 Energy Master Plan proposes to transition New Jersey to 100 percent clean energy by 2050. Last fall the governor set a goal of producing 11,000 megawatts of power through offshore wind energy by 2040. Ocean Wind 1 would account for one-tenth of that, or 1,100 megawatts.

"The agencies have a lot of authority, but the power really is in the people," Zipf said, "and people are just really beginning to understand the scope, scale, speed and magnitude of what's happening."

"There are new studies coming out all the time that are raising significant issues not just in terms of environment and marine life but all the impact to the livelihoods and economic engines that are the basis of so many industries in New Jersey, which is a clean, healthy thriving ocean."

Zipf noted the 16 whales that washed up on the shore in New Jersey, including this area, and in New York over

a period of a few months. That was part of a topic at a recent hearing held by state Senate Republicans recently that asserted a potential connection to geophysical survey work being conducted in preparation for building the wind turbine towers.

"We're not saying the whale deaths are the result, but we're saying it is plausible," she said. "The studies that are coming out, the decision documents that are coming out, there is significant cause for alarm. We have to again get that information into the public's hands and try to tell the agencies they are moving too much too fast."

Zipf cited a quote by National Marine Fisheries Service scientist Andrew Lipsky in an April ProPublica article written in conjunction with The New Bedford (Mass.) Light about commercial fishermen endangered by offshore wind development. "We're building this ship as we're sailing it," Lipsky said at a wind power conference. "When we don't think through the science, we often get ourselves in trouble."

She said studies taking place at the South Fork Wind Project in Massachusetts, which is ahead of the projects planned off the coast of New Jersey, are showing that turbine locations could result in "cascading, long-term permanent effects to species that rely on the area for spawning," including Atlantic cod.

"Another quote I found astonishing in one of the studies were fisheries scientists concerned how the repeated blasts from pile driving can cause fish kills. The sound wave impact can be felt underwater as far as 50 miles away and create cumulative stress response in fish, impacting their ability to feed and spawn."

"This would be devastating. The cod fishing industry in New England is critical. There are similar impacts that will happen here. Also additional concerns that were released on the reports of the electromagnetic fields that are caused by the (transmission) cables. There are going to be 10,000 miles of cables."

Zipf said studies are "indicating huge catastrophic consequences, which is why we've been supporting a pi-

lot project" for offshore wind to provide an opportunity to see the impact, on a limited basis, of having a wind farm off the coast.

She noted project developers in Massachusetts are saying the intense sound waves from construction can result in injury or mortality in fish stocks by rupturing swim bladders or causing internal hemorrhaging and that wind farms could affect migration patterns as well.

"They are so certain this is in the bag they are providing this information and federal agencies are seemingly not moved by the consequences from these developments," she said.

Back to the Jersey shore, Zipf said one of other things that came out for Ocean Wind 1 was a "shocking" biological opinion from the National Marine Fisheries Service.

It said that Ocean Wind 1, which is just one project with basically a hundred turbines, "will likely cause adverse effects to endangered species. That in and of itself is an extraordinary statement. Who should be allowed to likely harm endangered species? If you or I were to harm them we would get in a whole lot of trouble."

She stressed another line that said the wind farm was "likely to cause adverse effects but not likely to cause extinction."

"I don't think I'd want to put my trust in that, especially for a species like the North Atlantic right whale that is on the verge with less than 80 females left," Zipf said.

"It is challenging times and (wind farms are) coming like a freight train. A lot of this has happened in the last year and a half or two years. The announcement from the Biden administration that they want to pretty much pave the ocean with offshore wind from Massachusetts to South Carolina came out in 2021," she said.

Environmental groups have differed on offshore wind farms, ranging from firmly in support to actively opposed.

Some who support wind farms believe the negative impacts from their placement is outweighed by the need to create alternate energy sources and wean the world off fossil fuels that are helping drive climate

change.

"Some of our environmental colleagues want this to move forward as quickly as possible because we've got to do something about climate change," she said. "My response is, well, if we get this wrong, which it looks like we are because of the scope, scale and magnitude without even understanding what the consequences might be ... If you mess up the ocean, that's kind of it. You're worried about the warming of the ocean, but the ocean is our best friend when it comes to climate change because it is absorbing the heat. Ninety percent of heat that we've pumped into the atmosphere has been absorbed by the ocean."

Multiple wind farms, she said, are not the answer.

"Rather than enhancing the ocean's natural ability by increasing its health we're turning it into an industrial power plant," Zipf said. "With that comes a lot of hot water, literally, because of the transformer stations and the turbines themselves because they will be these big steel beacons that will be baked in the summer by the sun and that heat is going to get transferred, plus the energy that will be generated will be dissipating into the ocean so it's just going to warm up the ocean even faster."

"The ocean looks big and vast, but it's extremely fragile."

Zipf said the public and groups must continue to pressure federal agencies to slow down. She said that must continue in a nonpartisan fashion.

"For all the decades that Clean Ocean Action has been working on issues, for 40 years Republicans and Democrats alike have worked together for improving and creating this healthy ocean. Quite honestly, everyone depends on a healthy ocean and the ocean depends on everyone to be healthy. It's this symbiotic relationship. It is not partisan."

To learn more about the organization, visit cleanoceanaction.org. Ørsted's company website about its project off the coast of Cape May and Atlantic counties is oceanwindone.com.

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