

Environmental Groups and Fishermen File Lawsuit to Stop Empire Wind Project

Today, Protect Our Coast New Jersey, Clean Ocean Action, and ACK for Whales—filed a federal lawsuit to stop the Empire Wind offshore wind project.

TRENTON, NJ, UNITED STATES, June 3, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, a coalition of environmental organizations and family-owned commercial fishing businesses from New Jersey to Massachusetts filed a federal lawsuit in the U.S. District Court of New Jersey (PROTECT OUR COAST NJ et al v. UNITED STATES OF AMERICA et al; Case Number: 3:25-cv-06890) seeking to halt the Empire Wind 1 offshore wind project.

Led by Protect Our Coast New Jersey, Clean Ocean Action, and ACK for Whales, the plaintiffs include seafood operations, civic leaders, and fishing families who allege that the project poses risks to marine ecosystems and coastal livelihoods. They are requesting that U.S. Interior Secretary Doug Burgum reinstate the April 16 stop work order, which was lifted on May 15.

"This project was pushed forward without the science, scrutiny, or stakeholder-input required by law," said Robin Shaffer, President of Protect Our Coast NJ. "It places our ocean, our coastal economies, and our commercial fishing heritage in danger. Fishermen and environmentalists are united; this project must be stopped."

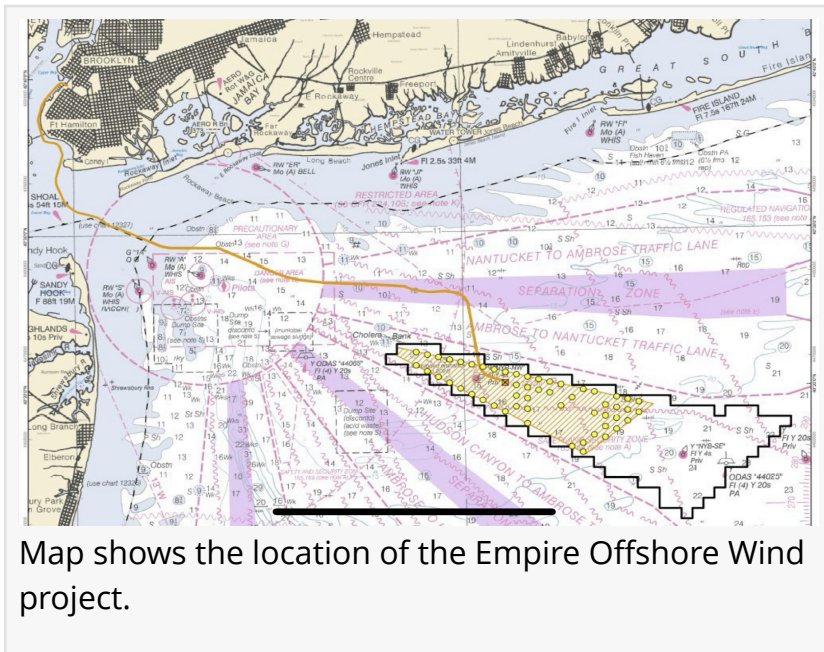
The Empire Wind 1 project involves the installation of 54 turbines off the coast of New York and New Jersey in an area described by the plaintiffs as biologically significant for fisheries and marine mammal migrations. The project includes plans to place approximately 3 billion pounds of rock on the seafloor, which the plaintiffs claim could affect habitats for scallops, squid, fluke, and other marine species.



Fisherman Ed Baxter views the Thialf, the second largest crane ship in the world, in Jamestown, Rhode Island. The Panamanian registered ship will be involved in construction activities for the Empire Offshore Wind project.

Lead counsel Bruce Afran stated that the case is based on legal deficiencies: “The federal government failed to meet its own legal standards for environmental review, species protection, and interagency coordination. These omissions are not procedural, they are unlawful.”

The plaintiffs raise concerns about environmental impact assessments, endangered species protections, essential fish habitat consultations, marine mammal authorizations, and potential effects on navigation, radar, and aviation safety. They also seek to nullify Equinor’s Empire Wind lease, arguing that it violates the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) due to Equinor’s majority ownership by the Kingdom of Norway.



Map shows the location of the Empire Offshore Wind project.

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Amy DiSibio

“New York’s increased electric rates will help fund a foreign government,” said Afran. “OCSLA does not permit leases to entities controlled by foreign states.”

The lawsuit argues that because Equinor is majority-owned by the Norwegian government, the lease should be considered unlawful and vacated.

“For over 40 years, Clean Ocean Action has defended the ocean,” said Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action. “In April, the Government Accountability Office report confirmed our claims—offshore wind development has been getting a pass with a fast-tracked, rubber-stamped approach. Clean Ocean Action fully supports this legal challenge to ensure the ocean is protected and laws are upheld.”

“The working men and women who bring sustainable seafood to American consumers’ plates risk extinction. We cannot stand by and let that happen,” said Bonnie Brady of the Long Island Commercial Fishing Association.

“This project is a precedent-setting assault on the ocean environment, our commercial and recreational fishing industries, tourism, and the very quality of life on the Jersey Shore,” said Mayor John Peterson, Jr. of Seaside Park, NJ. “There may be millions of dollars against us—but there are millions of us standing in defense of our coast.”

The coalition states it will continue to pursue the case in court and in public discourse. "We will not stand by while our ocean is sacrificed for foreign interests and political vanity, we will fight in court and in the court of public opinion until every piece of this reckless project is removed," said Amy DiSibio, Board Member of Nantucket-based ACK for Whales.

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