



Offshore Wind Energy Policy Position—March 2024

Delaware Nature Society (DelNature) supports environmentally responsible development of renewable energy sources, including offshore wind power. This is critical for meeting Delaware’s climate action goals and protecting people, wildlife, habitats, and ecosystems across the state and beyond from the growing negative effects of climate change.

There is broad international scientific agreement that the earth is warming, with perilous results for people and ecosystems. The National Wildlife Federation (NWF), of which DelNature is the state affiliate, recognizes climate change is the single greatest threat facing the nation’s wildlife and that carbon pollution from burning fossil fuels to generate electricity and power transportation is the primary contributor to climate change.

DelNature has historically supported reducing anthropogenic (human caused) particulate and greenhouse gas emissions. DelNature also has for years called for adoption of clean, renewable energy sources in general (DelNature Climate Change Policy, November 2006), and it supports efforts at federal, state, and local levels to reduce these contributions to climate change.

Delaware’s Climate Change Solutions Act of 2023 recognizes that the use of fossil fuels to generate electricity and power our transportation—the two largest sources of carbon emissions—is not sustainable. The resulting pollution poses risks to human health and to the environment, including the lands and waters DelNature is dedicated to protecting.

One of the effects of climate change is sea level rise, which is especially problematic in Delaware—on average, the lowest lying state in the country. Sea level rise, in conjunction with the coastal subsidence that is occurring, leads to inundation and saltwater intrusion of farm fields along the coast and to higher floods during large storms and extreme high tides. These impacts are especially damaging to environmentally and economically vulnerable communities, which exacerbates environmental injustices. Without significant intervention, these effects will worsen.

The State is well positioned to adopt offshore wind energy. Delaware has abundant wind resources and designated offshore wind energy area sites in federal waters off the Delaware Coast offered by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management for lease by developers. According to modeling by the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, an offshore wind project of 800 megawatts has the potential to provide about a quarter of the state’s current energy needs. Yet Delaware is the only coastal state from Massachusetts to North Carolina that has not yet created a policy on development of offshore wind.

As a state affiliate, DelNature is guided, in part, by the technical resources and experts of NWF’s offshore wind program. NWF is active in reviewing proposed projects and has been steadfast in recommending that all offshore wind projects limit impacts to fish spawning areas, horseshoe crabs, and other benthic resources, and that they address impacts on bird species near project areas through smart siting of projects, minimally disruptive technologies and practices, and safeguards for wildlife.

DelNature will use this and other scientific expertise to guide efforts to advocate for policies and practices that advance the use of offshore wind through responsible development that minimizes impacts to wildlife and marine habitats.