

Heather Mann
Midwater Trawlers Cooperative

Is a mother's concern about climate change and warming oceans enough of a reason to rush forward with offshore wind energy development? And at a proposed scale of development that does not currently exist anywhere on the planet? To be fair the oceans are changing, and as fishermen, we are seeing the impacts of a warming planet. Some good, some bad, and some awful. But do those changes necessitate rushing to privatize and industrialize our oceans without fully understanding what the impacts could be to marine life, the ecosystem, or to those food providers who rely on our oceans to provide a low-carbon, healthy protein to Americans?

Is spreading partial information or fear-mongering okay if it is ultimately for what someone believes is a good cause? Are jobs for a depressed area a reason to throw caution to the wind and construct hundreds of 1,000-foot-tall floating turbines and place them off Oregon's coast? Each platform having tethers made of steel chain that need to be pile-driven into the seabed? Is it a good idea at all to place complex machines 30 miles out in the harsh Pacific Ocean saltwater environment where weather buoys routinely break free from their moorings because of the elements? Is a turbine farm going to withstand a 9+ earthquake along the Cascadia subduction zone?

Is the climate crisis so bad that collateral damage is part of the transition to using fewer fossil fuels? Collateral damage to whales, endangered seabirds, multigenerational commercial fishing businesses, to unique coastal communities? Should a fisherman be forced to transition from the life he knows as a food provider to be trained as an offshore wind technician? Does this mean processing plants also shutter and Americans lose access to sustainable, domestic seafood? All in the name of solving the climate crisis?

Is asking questions and wanting science and research to understand impacts to make informed decisions just stalling the process? Does Oregon really need offshore wind energy to meet our climate goals, or can we fulfill those goals by expanding the existing renewables we already have? Wouldn't expanding the existing land-based renewables be faster and less expensive? And we already know the impacts from those renewable energy sources.

What if we take federal money, tax-breaks, and subsidies out of the equation. Or better yet, what if that federal money was available for any renewable energy type— onshore wind, hydro, solar, and small scale nuclear. Do people still really believe that offshore floating wind energy is the answer? At the very least, why aren't there solar panels on every federal building in our state? And on every school, home, and county building?

Does someone's personal belief about the need to mitigate a warming ocean somehow elevate them as superior to the average working man? The question is really this – if commercial fisheries, the ecosystem, and the marine habitat are going to be impacted, is offshore wind energy really the right choice for Oregon?