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Per email: [osw@coastal.ca.gov](mailto:osw@coastal.ca.gov)

**Comments on the *Statewide Strategy for the Coexistence of California  
Fishing Communities and Offshore Wind Energy***

Dear Director Hucklebridge:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *Strategy* and the process that generated it. The very fact of the existence of a consensus document on the coexistence of fishing communities and offshore wind developers denotes success. As best we can determine, the Commission engaged in a long and difficult—but ultimately productive—meeting of minds, concerns and people. We congratulate all the members of the *Strategy* task force and Commission staff.

We also thank Senator Mike McGuire, who early on saw the need for a structured process to increase understanding between fishing communities and floating offshore wind developers.

Prior to the development of the *Strategy*, we consistently were told by fishing communities that their concerns were not being heard. In the *Strategy* document and in the comments of members made at the February Coastal Commission meeting, it is clear that this omission was corrected. While not all goals were achieved by any group, all the parties to the dialogues *did* hear each other and were able to empathically understand each other. This is a very considerable accomplishment.

That said, we want to provide some important context for the report and raise some questions. In brief:

1. The context for the *Strategy* is critical. Fisheries will be transformed by climate change; the faster we enable an energy transition from fossil fuels to renewables the more degradation of the oceans and fisheries we can prevent.

2. The oceans are going to be part of U.S. energy strategy. The current federal administration is pushing offshore oil drilling while kneecapping offshore wind. Offshore oil is far worse for fisheries, the health of the oceans, and marine life than offshore wind.
3. The report lacks any discussion of community benefits and socio/economic issues surrounding ports and harbors. The points of contention embedded in these issues would benefit from a process like that which produced the *Strategy*.
4. Fishing communities are looking for a degree of certainty. The *Strategy* is too limited in recommending *specific* actions that would ensure coexistence.
5. A less complicated mechanism for adapting to challenges than is suggested in the *Strategy* would be beneficial. (It is not realistic to call the task force back to resolve every issue.) We think perhaps there is a role for an ombuds function as well as a small executive committee for dealing with unanticipated issues as they arise.

Below, our detailed comments:

**1. Climate change will transform fisheries regardless of offshore wind development. Without mitigating emissions through a renewable energy transition the changes will accelerate.**

This point was made clearly by Commissioner Mike Wilson. Quoting from a [local newspaper report](#):

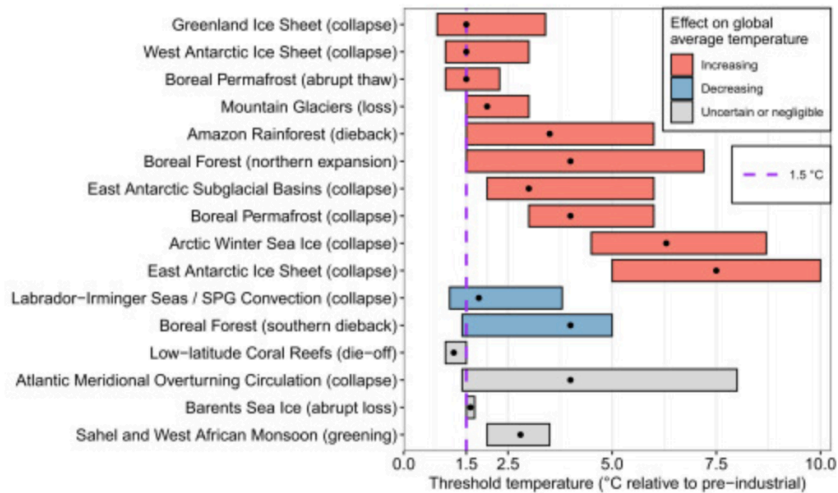
“Humboldt County Supervisor and Commissioner Mike Wilson joined commissioners in thanking the working group for their contributions to the report but emphasized that there is still work to be done. ‘When we’re in these processes, [I have to] remind myself that we’re pursuing offshore wind, and specifically floating offshore wind, to address a crisis, and that crisis will impact the ocean that we’re talking about,’ he said. ‘The crisis isn’t just sea level rise ... we’re also talking about warming and ... seeing changes in where species can survive.’”

We would like to reinforce Commissioner Wilson’s point by referencing three peer-reviewed studies from the last four months.

a. [The risk of a hothouse Earth trajectory](#)

“Earth’s climate is now departing from the stable conditions that supported human civilization for millennia. Crossing critical temperature thresholds may trigger self-reinforcing feedbacks and tipping dynamics that amplify warming and destabilize distant Earth system components. Uncertain tipping thresholds make precaution essential, as crossing them could commit the planet to a hothouse trajectory with long-lasting and potentially irreversible consequences.”

## B Tipping elements



Tipping point threshold temperature estimates are shown with black dots; floating bars indicate lower and upper estimates.”

- b. [Coral](#) reefs sustain 25% of marine life. Scientists have now determined that the estimated tipping threshold for low-latitude coral reefs [has likely already been crossed](#).
- c. New [research](#) analyzing satellite images of the planet over a span of more than 20 years found that one shade of green in the oceans, representing chlorophyll produced by phytoplankton, is fading. This is a sign of phytoplankton decline, a red flag for key ocean systems that sustain food chains and regulate the climate.

Without a transition away from fossil fuels, these trends will accelerate, negatively affecting all oceans and fisheries everywhere.

## 2. Offshore wind and offshore oil drilling both generate needed energy, but offshore oil is far more destructive of fisheries and marine life.

At the Commission meeting, fisherman Mike Conroy suggested that “Nothing in the world provides a comparable magnitude of offshore wind encroachment on fisheries.” While he may have meant that other offshore wind projects have less of an encroachment on fisheries than the West Coast projects, if we take the statement literally, then it is incorrect because offshore oil drilling is a far greater threat to fisheries and marine life than any offshore wind project. Here are some significant differences:

- Offshore wind produces far less chronic pollution than offshore oil drilling, which demonstrably releases heavy metals, toxic waste, and petroleum products in the daily course of doing business.
- Offshore wind poses zero risk of catastrophic spills such as the Deepwater Horizon, which [seriously impacted](#) marine mammals, larval fish, the marine floor, coastal communities and resources, and birds.

- Offshore wind development requires no seismic explorations, which can greatly reduce catch rates of some fish species.

With the current administration’s attempts to shut down offshore wind while promoting offshore drilling, *this comparison is directly relevant*. It is clear offshore areas of the ocean will be used for energy from one source *or* the other. ***Utilizing the winds has far less impact on fisheries and fishing communities and marine life than does drilling for offshore oil.***

**3. No discussion of community benefits is included, nor is there discussion of impacts on ports and harbors. Communities that will be affected by offshore wind development should be heard in the same type of forum afforded fisheries interests.**

There is no discussion of community benefits in the report. Around the world, almost all wind developers have offered local communities a community benefits agreement. At least in Humboldt, there is very little to show for this yet. Many of the comments at the February meeting—by Amy Vierra, Danielle Mulaney, and Abby Mohan as well as Commissioners in their own statements—indicate that the process used in developing the draft report can and should be applied to other communities sure to be impacted by the contentious issues surrounding offshore wind.

Early in the *Strategy* sessions, Brightline Defense made a presentation on environmental justice and community benefits. If the Commission sees the consultation process as beneficial and consequential, it should be applied to community benefits.

Many of the processes outlined in the report, such as characterizing the socioeconomic status of fishing communities, are equally relevant to community benefits. The presentation to the advisory group by Dr. Ruttenberg of Cal Poly Humboldt makes the point that we need to study these changes. It is unclear how much the methodology for socioeconomic determinations of losses for fishing communities, which is quite specific, might apply more broadly to losses and gains that are not just a matter of financial costs or benefits. But it is worth the effort to discern these costs and benefits, because ***offshore wind must be seen as a benefit to everyone***. If not, it becomes a focus for division and antagonism between different groups, which threatens the existence of offshore wind as well as repeating the history of extractive industries—which is well-known to north coast communities.

Similarly, no discussion of offshore wind’s effects on ports and bays is included in the Strategy. Ports and harbors also present issues for fishing communities, as well as for Tribes, businesses, and local communities. *We suggest combining an expanded public participation process like the Strategy task force for harbors and ports with a process for determining community benefits.*

**4. Specific actions that would ensure future productive engagement by stakeholders are missing from the Strategy.**

Some specific omissions:

- a. The three compensatory payment templates are far too sketchy. They do not seem to accomplish any of the goals that the text sets out in considerable detail (in Chapter 6). We would like to see much more substance in them.

- b. There is no consideration of funding to support the various fishing community and tribal liaisons who participate in negotiations envisioned by the *Strategy* (including the Fishermen’s Task Force discussed in Chapter 5).
- c. The fisheries compensation agreement would be between the developer and the Commission. *The Strategy* talks about things that *could* be included. No promises. No amounts. And it depends on the Coastal Commission being a trusted broker.

Formulators of the *Strategy* are being conservative because there is so much unknown. We hold that detailed proposals would be more likely to generate support. The Commission can make it clear that these tentative agreements could be modified as we learn more and things change.

**5. A more streamlined method of handling disputes and new issues may be needed.**

The *Strategy* will be used by developers and fishing communities as development proceeds. But there is no mechanism for *parties to the agreement* to raise concerns that the *Strategy* is not being followed or that it needs modification. The *Strategy* does say that the Coastal Commission staff will monitor and if necessary engage with the working group; but this does not give agency to concerned parties and seems a cumbersome approach suitable only to very major changes. Because so much is only sketched out, more specific mechanisms should be built into the process. A possibility would be an executive committee of developers, Commission staff and fishing representatives that could ensure the spirit of the document is maintained as new issues arise. And perhaps the Commission would consider designating a trusted Ombudsperson.

**In conclusion**

The Commission invested two years working with representatives of fishing communities and offshore wind developers to meet and discuss issues in an atmosphere of mutual respect. But this process will have succeeded only *if* the comments of tribal and other fishing associations indicate substantial concurrence with the final report.

At the Coastal Commission meeting fisherman Ken Bates addressed the issue, as reported by Lost Coast Outpost:

Ken Bates, a working group member and longtime advocate for both local and state fisheries, urged the Coastal Commission to use the document to establish conditions that “have the force and effect of the law and minimize impacts to fishermen and fishing communities. Permit conditions should include robust funding for long-term fishing community resiliency in light of the irreplaceable fishing ground loss that the footprints of these projects take up,” Bates said. “I would point out ... that the Coastal Commission is the only state agency with specific provisions for protecting and enhancing commercial fishing activities within the [its] charter.”

In their comments to the Commission, other fishing representatives also emphasized their continuing reservations. One of the strongest opponents to floating offshore wind, the Morro Bay Commercial Fishermen's Organization, submitted a letter prior to the Commission’s February meeting with a long list of grievances. Whether the *Strategy* can be considered a success will depend in part on whether that organization, the Port San Luis Commercial Fishermen's Association, Responsible Energy Adaptation for California's Transition, The

California Fishermen’s Resiliency Association, and the Humboldt Fishermen’s Marketing Association have moderated their opposition.

There is also a section in the report that lists two pages of broad tribal concerns that were not addressed. See *Annex I: Broader Tribal Concerns About Offshore Wind Energy Development, page 125* . However, some of the work products seem likely to have a strong effect on relations with tribes in the future, especially the *How to Formalize and Create an Agreement, page 123*.

We recognize that some groups are unlikely to ever endorse compromise, but *the Coastal Commission needs a secondary strategy for generating peaceful coexistence if many reservations and concerns remain that are unlikely to be addressed by the processes the Strategy has outlined.*

***Offshore wind is a contentious issue with tremendous potential for reducing climate-warming emissions and bringing much needed renewable energy to all of California. In developing a strategy for California, the Commission is learning from the experience of New England and Europe and planning to address some of the challenges endemic to transforming our energy economy. It is essential that the Strategy, when approved, both satisfy current stakeholders and provide for the adaptive management that will be essential to successful projects.***

Thank you for considering these views.



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350 Humboldt Steering Committee



Janet Cox, CEO  
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Cc: Senator Mike McGuire and Commissioner Mike Wilson