

Press Release: Save LBI Coalition Calls for Moratorium on BPU Awards for Offshore Wind Projects

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Bob Stern, President
Organization: Save Long Beach Island, Inc.
Email: info@savelbi.org
Phone: 917-952-5016

Save Long Beach Island Coalition Urges Immediate Moratorium on NJ Board of Public Utility (BPU) Awards for Offshore Wind Projects

July 22, 2024 – Save Long Beach Island, the coalition of citizens dedicated to protecting our oceans and New Jersey Shore communities, today called for an immediate moratorium on all new and revised Board of Public Utilities (BPU) awards for New Jersey offshore wind-turbine projects following the catastrophic failure of a massive wind turbine blade from the Vineyard Wind project off the coast of Massachusetts. The blade broke apart, causing countless large and small shards of fiberglass and pieces of foam to wash up on the shores of Nantucket Island, which resulted in beach closures and potential long-term hazards.

This is not the first time a wind turbine built by GE Vernova came apart, according to a [Reuters report](#), which cited several instances of blade failures.

“The incident is a stark reminder of the many potential disasters offshore wind turbines can pose to the shore and the marine environment, and adds to the concerns already raised regarding turbine visibility, reduced breeze, and airborne noise,” said Bob Stern, president and a founder of Save LBI. The Vineyard Wind project is considerably smaller than the Atlantic Shores South project, which aims to erect 200 huge wind turbines off the coast of southern Long Beach Island, to be followed by another 157 turbines going up to the north end of the Island; the turbines would sit as close as 8-9 miles off the coastline.

Dr. Stern emphasized the necessity of a moratorium to thoroughly address several critical issues not sufficiently analyzed in the Atlantic Shores South project's final environmental impact statement. That project is currently seeking a revised BPU approval.

Key concerns include:

- Quantifying the risk of turbine component failures
- Assessing debris travel patterns and impacts to the shore and marine life
- Ensuring effective communications and clean-up mechanisms are in place, and
- Properly evaluating turbine resilience against nor'easters and catastrophic storms

The New Jersey BPU acknowledged in a recent [memorandum](#) that “Atlantic hurricanes pose a significant potential threat to the State’s burgeoning OSW [offshore wind] sector,” echoing concerns raised in the Atlantic Shores South construction and operating plan (COP). There is also an urgent need for a better understanding of the repair and removal processes for wind turbine components, both during failures and at the end of their useful life.

In response to the potential hazards from this incident, Vineyard Wind issued a statement on July 17 asserting that “the fiberglass fragments are not hazardous to people or the environment.” However, on Wednesday, the company advised the public to “avoid handling debris” and recommended using gloves for any necessary handling. Vineyard Wind said it is actively working to collect, track, and transport all debris off the island to appropriate storage facilities.

Despite these precautions, Save LBI remains concerned about Nantucket residents who have already handled the materials and the potential toxicity of the glues used in the turbine blades. “The incident also leaves open the question of whether all those small shards of fiberglass can be adequately removed from the beach,” Stern said.

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Facts Related to the Vineyard Wind Turbine Catastrophe:

- This is not the first time a wind turbine built by GE Vernova came apart, according to a [Reuters report](#): “At least one other GE Vernova offshore wind turbine came apart this year, at the massive Dogger Bank A project off the U.K. coast, and several onshore wind turbines in Germany and Sweden have also broken in recent years, according to a Reuters examination of recent incidents in the wind power industry.”
- The federal Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement is investigating the incident and has ordered operations to shut down until further notice.
- Debris from the broken blade was initially spotted by the Coast Guard on Saturday, July 13.
- On July 18, the Coast Guard advised mariners that a 300-foot-long piece of debris was reported in the area.
- The Vineyard Wind project, a joint venture between Avangrid Renewables and Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners, is the country’s second large-scale offshore wind farm with a planned 62 turbines, each over 800 feet tall.
- Construction of Vineyard Wind began in January 2023, and the project has been generating electricity since February 2024.
- The turbine blade that failed was being tested at the time of the incident.

About Save LBI

Save Long Beach Island (Save LBI) is a coalition of citizens working together to protect the ocean and Long Beach Island and neighboring communities from the destructive impact of offshore wind projects. We are a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization and do not endorse any candidates or politicians, but we do aggressively pursue programs, policies, and actions to protect the Island and surrounding communities. The coalition is led by Beach Haven resident Dr. Bob Stern, an engineer with experience in environmental law who previously managed the office in the U.S. Department of Energy that oversees the protection of the environment as it relates to energy programs and projects. Visit SaveLBI.org to see our fact-based research and find out how you can help.