



Block Island Wind Farm, USA

FAQ: Fishing & offshore wind

Sharing the waters

Will fishing be affected by early project studies?

Most studies for offshore wind projects in the next few years, such as wind monitoring, seabed surveys and environmental surveys, are expected to be low impact. Each offshore wind project must consult during the planning and delivery of these studies.

Can I enter and fish in a wind farm during construction?

Construction involves the use of large vessels and installing major infrastructure. To keep everyone safe, we'll ask you to keep well clear of areas in a wind farm where construction activities are underway.

Will fishing be allowed in operating wind farms?

Recreational fishing and many types of commercial fishing will be able to continue.

Depending on the final size and layout of each project, and the fishing vessel and gear used, some types of commercial fishing could be challenging to continue inside a wind farm. To discuss your individual situation please contact the project/s proposed in the area where you fish.

How close can I fish to a turbine?

Recreational and commercial fishing has continued in other offshore wind farms around the world, and the same can happen here. In some cases, a 'safety zone' or 'protection zone' may be put in place around infrastructure for safety.

Can I navigate between turbines?

Each project will be different, but typical offshore wind farm layouts provide at least 1 km between turbines, allowing space to safely navigate through.

Will anchoring be allowed?

While cables are buried where possible, there is still a risk of snagging anchors. For this reason, anchoring is typically avoided along cable routes unless it's needed in an emergency. A 'protection zone' may be put in place where cables are at a risk of being snagged.

How will I know where turbines and cables are located?

Once installed, turbine and cable locations will be communicated and labelled on charts.

This information sheet has been prepared by the 10 offshore wind developers with project proposals off the Gippsland coast. Each project is unique – please contact the project/s where you fish to discuss your individual circumstances.



Regulation

Who regulates the offshore wind sector?

The Offshore Infrastructure Regulator is responsible for regulating offshore wind projects in Commonwealth waters under the Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021.

What are safety and protection zones?

The purpose of safety and protection zones is to protect workers, marine users, and infrastructure from harm. These zones are only approved by the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator following formal consultation and where there is a strong reason for using them. Priority must first be given to sharing the waters.

- **Safety zones** restrict access up to 500 metres around key infrastructure. They will typically be used during construction when infrastructure is in the process of being installed and commissioned. Once projects are operating, safety zones will only be approved if there is a strong justification for them.
- **Protection zones** don't restrict access but may place limits on certain activities such as anchoring, mining or trawling if these present a risk to safety or infrastructure.

To establish one of these zones, an offshore wind project would first need to consult with other marine users and make a formal application to the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator which includes the rationale, maps and other information. The public can make submissions which are considered by the Regulator when deciding whether to grant, change or refuse a protection zone application.

Environment

Could wind farms create new habitat for fish and new fishing opportunities?

There is the potential for the wind farm infrastructure to become an artificial reef, providing new habitat and boosting fish stocks. This has been observed on some offshore wind farms overseas, and on oil and gas platforms and jetties in Australia.

Will wind farms affect the marine environment and fish?

Each project will undergo a detailed environmental impact assessment and will need to meet strict environmental criteria to obtain approvals. Consultation is an important part of this process. Projects which cannot meet these criteria will not be able to proceed.

Timing

When would construction start on the first project, and how long would it take?

The earliest construction could start is toward the end of this decade – but there's a lot to be done before that can happen. Projects first need to apply for and obtain a range of approvals, secure a customer and financing to pay for construction, and confirm the availability of transmission, ports and suppliers.

Depending on the size of the wind farm and requirements for construction, offshore construction typically takes 3-5 years.

What is the status of the projects?

12 offshore wind projects have been granted a Feasibility Licence to study the feasibility of offshore wind energy off the Gippsland coast. To proceed to construction, these projects would also need a range of approvals and a further Commercial Licence.

Each project is at a different stage. There's still a lot of work to do to study, assess and design these projects. It's not clear yet which ones will move forward to construction.

Projects are aiming to be ready to meet Victoria's offshore wind targets of 2 GW by 2032, 4 GW by 2035 and 9 GW by 2040. A competitive bid process run by the Victorian Government will determine which projects move to the next stage.

