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Offshore Windpower is a Bad Idea for California

I am writing as an energy project manager with more than 30 years of experience. I have managed the construction of many utility scale energy generation facilities, including 100's of megawatts of Wind and solar renewable facilities. I know windpower intimately, having managed the construction of more than 300 MW of utility scale projects in southern and central California, and I do not believe that the interests of environmental health and issues of safety and reliability are not well served by offshore windpower.

First, it must be understood that wind turbines require extensive infrastructure, that in turn requires frequent maintenance. Cable laying is a destructive process that will harm the ocean floor. Floating turbine structures will create a hazard to marine traffic. In my past projects providing power on oil platforms in the Gulf of Mexico and the Channel Islands, I frequently witnessed workers "retiring" defunct compressors, cranes, and other heavy equipment by simply pushing the equipment overboard. I know this practice continues because I have witnessed it as recently as two years ago, and there is a sense of impunity by oil companies regarding the chance of discovery and accountability.

Understand also that the marine environment creates another order of magnitude when it comes to maintenance. A survey of wind installations in the U.K. and Norway easily confirms this. It would take a bond equivalent to the cost of each turbine to dissuade the owners from allowing their equipment and structures to remain in proper operable condition. Bear in mind that many of the entities that want to build offshore wind in California are related or derivative of the same oil companies that have committed damage to our coastline in previous generations.

I understand how exciting the prospect of existing interconnection facilities (Diablo and Morro) must be to those companies who have been subjected to millions of dollars in assessed interconnection facility costs by the CAISO, but there are far less impacting answers to utilizing this capacity: there is ample real estate available on the coast to site solar power, which has a fraction of the operational liability of wind.

Our oceans do not need any further impingement on the marine environment. Our attention needs to be focused on cleaning up what we have already defiled instead of putting more man made material in an ocean that we have already damaged nearly beyond restoration.