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Letter: 'Take' authorizations prove NOAA is lying about whale deaths

Posted Wednesday, March 22, 2023 4:30 pm

The marine science community knows this much for certain: The high-resolution geophysical (HRG) surveys used to site offshore wind turbines and transmission cabling causes harm and mortality to marine mammals. They know the intense noise of pounding thousands of monopiles deep into the seabed, along with an exponential increase of vessel traffic during construction and for maintenance afterwards will do the same—disturb, injure, and kill marine life.

Here's the proof: As of mid-March 2023, NOAA Fisheries has handed out 15 marine mammal Incidental Take Authorizations (ITAs) to offshore wind projects from NC to MA. These will allow companies to “take” 111,817 whales, dolphins and seals. The harassment, injury, and killing of marine mammals are referred to as “takes.”

The 111,817 figure is the tally of 118 “Level A” and 111,699 “Level B” takes. Level A includes permanent hearing loss and other bodily injury. Level B harassment includes behavioral disturbance (such as frightening an animal from its normal feeding area) and temporary hearing loss. A deafened whale fleeing into a shipping channel is likely a dead whale.

It is illegal to take any federally listed animal, that is, unless one applies for and is granted an ITA. An “incidental” take is defined as, “an unintentional, but not unexpected taking of a protected species.”

NOAA is in the final stages of approving an additional 1,272 Level A and 477,285 Level B takes of marine mammals for another 11 wind projects. Soon the approved ITA count will permit wind companies to disturb, injure or cause the death of 590,374 marine mammals. These figures were compiled by carefully searching 26 individual wind project ITA requests. NOAA either does not have or will not share cumulative take numbers.

The data reveals that NOAA has either granted or is in the final stages of granting Level B takes for 915 critically endangered North Atlantic right whales, of which there are only 334 remaining animals

alive. Either this means NOAA and the wind companies expect repeated harassment (including recurrent hearing impairment) of numerous right whales, or they have not taken the trouble to realize they have granted more “takes” than the number of live whales who exist today.

A total of 387 A and 21,704 B takes have been or are close to being approved for whales. These numbers include the taking of five species of endangered whales. For eight dolphin species A takes total 140; B takes total 474,605. A takes total 658 for harbor porpoise; B takes total 24,122 porpoises. A takes total 205 harbor, grey, and harp seals; B takes total 68,553 seals.

The numbers of “not unexpected” harassment and injury of marine mammals are staggering.

NOAA states in its February posting of Sunrise Wind’s ITA request (NOAA-NMFS-2023-0012): “Project activities likely to result in incidental take include pile driving...*and vessel-based site assessment surveys using HRG equipment.*”

Still NOAA has only one answer to the question being asked by thousands of coastal residents as to whether wind companies’ recent seismic testing might be related to the highly unusual number of whale strandings: NO.

Why are they lying?

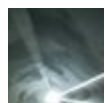
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**Mark Twichell**

The wind industry fouls government from municipal, to state and federal levels. Their business model is based on nondisclosure of benefits and environmental impact. Those who are intolerant of opacity in the practices of fossil fuel companies have yet to lift the thin veil of illusion separating the wind industry and fossil resources.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 1 · 32w**Barbara Cattaneo**

This whole thing rings of some kind of impropriety. Why are we coming to one conclusion and those in power see things so differently?!?

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 1 · 32w**Lee Sandham Evans**

You are seriously asking this question? Because they are all for the Green New Deal and saying anything against wind power goes against the narrative and the energy goals of this administration. As far as many ecological groups go the wind companies have paid the majority of them off with huge donations. They are compromised. I would be glad to supply a list of the organizations and the money they took if you would like.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 30w**David Wojick**

Unfortunately NOAA specifically claims that none of this past and future harassment has or will kill a single critter. They even claim there is no evidence to that effect. But they have carefully not done any research on this question.

I have a lot of articles on this issue.

See <https://www.cfact.org/author/dwojick/>

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 23w**Dave-Violettez-Clown**

A self-serving comment with a link to your own false information website. Nice

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 1 · 14w**Dave-Violettez-Clown**

When you want to see the misinformation campaigns paid for by the good folk from Koch Industries and their multiple oil and gas segments. Look no further than the attacks on actual science and federal agencies like NOAA.

The Consumer Energy Alliance (CEA) is an industry front group established to influence public perception and government regulation in favor of extractive energy industries. CEA specializes in coordinating "astroturfing" efforts that are frequently funded by oil and gas interests. The group was founded by Republican lobbyist Michael Whatley of HRW Resources, a leading pronoun. [See more](#)

ounded by Republican lobbyist Michael Whalley of TDW Resources, a leading propert... [See more](#)

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Tom Alitt

Well and you're truly an unbiased observer? You just doing the will of your progressive Masters. No real followers no contacts, kind of like fake profile I guess

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MEET OUR STAFF

Jim McGaw

A lifelong Portsmouth resident, Jim graduated from Portsmouth High School in 1982 and earned a journalism degree from the University of Rhode Island in 1986. He's worked two different stints at East Bay Newspapers, for a total of 18 years with the company so far. When not running all over town bringing you the news from Portsmouth, Jim listens to lots and lots and lots of music, watches obscure silent films from the '20s and usually has three books going at once. He also loves to cook crazy New Orleans dishes for his wife of 25 years, Michelle, and their two sons, Jake and Max.

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