

# Understanding Policy Makers' Perception of Offshore Wind Power Development

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## Problem Statement

More than 70% of the electric generation in US uses coal, oil and natural gas. Fossil fuel combustion for electric generation is the single largest source of greenhouse gas emission in the nation. Alternative energy sources are being explored to reduce the dependence on fossil fuels. Offshore wind power is a promising alternative, capable of provide utility scale energy at competitive prices. Preliminary resource assessment indicates presence of large wind resource offshore, located close to the major population centers with considerable electric loads. In the last four years, the attempts to harness this resource has met with differing response from the policy makers and stakeholders in coastal states. For example, the State of New York validated the siting of an offshore wind farm close to Long Island, while New Jersey imposed a moratorium on such a development.

## Research Policy Objectives

This research aims to (1) analyze the motivation for different policy paths taken by coastal states to address offshore wind power development, (2) examine and explain the impact of state level policy actions on the evolution of a regulatory regime for marine based renewable energy resources in general and offshore wind power in particular, and (3) on a larger context, enhance the understanding of policy construction and development of marine based 'public' and 'common pool' resources.

## Proposed Research

The primary focus of this research is to answer the question, "why have policy makers in coastal states reacted differently to the offshore wind power development in state waters?" The first question feeds into the second research question, "how will these reactions (to offshore wind power development) impact the ongoing evolution of the regulatory setup for offshore wind power in particular and marine based renewable energy sources in general, at the state and federal levels.

## Tools and Techniques

Two theoretical models, situated rational choice theory and cultural theory of risk perception will be adapted to construct a framework for research. Purposive sampling method will be used to identify policymakers and stakeholders at the state and federal level. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted for data collection. The data will be coded using grounded theory and other qualitative methods, and analyzed for categories in the two theoretical models. Based on the research, cultural models of policy makers and stakeholders towards offshore wind power will be identified and explored to answer the research questions.

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