



MIDWATER TRAWLERS COOPERATIVE

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Oregon Legislators: **Please vote no on SB678.**

[Midwater Trawlers Cooperative](#) (MTC) is a non-profit trade association based in Newport, Oregon. MTC represents 32 commercial fishing vessels who harvest sustainable seafood and deliver into ports up and down the Oregon coast. MTC also leads and helps to coordinate the informal coalition [Protect US Fishermen](#), a group of over 25 different businesses and organizations engaged with offshore wind energy development. Together both organizations represent tens of thousands of fishing-related jobs and businesses on the West Coast.

It is alarming to see how many public commenters and pro-wind advocates believe that community benefit agreements are a simple fix to all the concerns we have about the siting and operation of offshore wind energy turbine arrays. MTC has gone on the record supporting local union jobs for any work that may be done – this is critical to ensure that local jobs and quality workmanship is used if offshore floating wind is installed off Oregon’s coast. Community benefit agreements are good options for ensuring local labor standards are used and potentially can be beneficial if money is flowing back to communities for various infrastructure or other projects. However, community benefit agreements cannot make up for the loss of someone’s livelihood or loss of a multigenerational fishing business. Community benefit agreements can in no way resolve uncertainties around the negative environmental impacts of offshore wind – which studies are showing more and more could be as damaging or more damaging than the climate crisis itself. Equally as concerning, offshore wind developers who are multi-national corporations based outside of the United States, are trying to do the very least that they must in terms of mitigation. Bolstering their efforts is the weakening of environmental reviews and NEPA analysis which recently passed by congress through the debt ceiling compromise.

While offshore wind energy may play a part in Oregon’s transition to renewable energy, the concerns about this development are many. The current call areas identified by BOEM are in prime fishing grounds for several different sustainable fisheries that contribute greatly to coastal community economies in Oregon. Commercial fishing activities cannot occur within turbine arrays due to operational and safety constraints and dislocated effort will lose access to some of the cleanest and best fishing on the coast. This has trickle-down impacts- for example, MTC vessels have harvested hundreds of millions of pounds of Pacific whiting out of the current call areas identified by BOEM. This fish is delivered into several Oregon ports and goes into domestic and national markets as an affordable healthy protein. Another major market is the national school lunch program, where

Pacific whiting is being eaten by hundreds of thousands of U.S. school kids. One in six kids in the United States is food insecure- in Oregon it is one in eight children who are facing food insecurity. Some kids get their only healthy meal at lunch, and they are eating Pacific whiting in the form of fish sticks and fish burgers thanks to the USDA purchases each year. If we can't harvest those fish, there will be an impact to the school lunch program. In a cruel twist of irony, Pacific whiting has one of the lowest carbon footprints of all protein – so displacing a carbon friendly food production fishery for wind turbines seems to be a conflict. Impacts to seafood processors will occur as well – groundfish like Pacific whiting is the “glue” that holds processing infrastructure and work force together throughout the year. This allows processors to receive pulse landings from fisheries like crab, shrimp and albacore which have relatively short seasons and for which seafood plants could not rely on solely to keep plants operational 12 months out of the year. This is only one example of why getting the siting of offshore wind right from the beginning is so important.

Environmental concerns continue to emerge. Consider hydroelectric – when the dams were initially envisioned and built it was thought that they would be a game-changer: inexpensive and renewable energy. We got both those things, but the unintended consequence was putting salmon species on the verge of extinction. We have spent billions of tax-payer dollars trying to solve the salmon problem, unsuccessfully. We cannot create another environmental catastrophe in the California Current Ecosystem trying to solve the climate crisis – you cannot throw enough money at the California current to fix any similar problems such as what continues with dams. Community benefit agreements are no match for environmental degradation, negative impacts to the ecosystem, marine mammals and birds, and our sustainable natural resources.

Finally, the discussion around community benefit agreements as envisioned with SB678 is completely premature. Governor Kotek has asked for a pause from BOEM on identifying wind energy areas so that additional stakeholder outreach and dialog between groups can be had. We should be focused on HB2534 which directs the State to analyze a comprehensive approach to identify pathways to reach Oregon's future energy goals. HB2534 would take a holistic look at offshore and onshore renewable energy and how much of each may be needed to reach our goals – the State has not fully embraced offshore wind energy and as stakeholders, we are unaware of an implementation commitment. Instead, the legislature in 2022 commissioned a report identifying challenges and opportunities in planning for offshore wind which laid out significant concerns and potential negative impacts to communities and the environment. During this legislative session, Oregon Solutions was commissioned to complete an assessment about community benefit agreements and the potential for a collaborative approach to defining how they could work in Oregon. That assessment found that most stakeholders were not ready to have these conversations especially when it is not clear that any wind energy will be installed off the Oregon coast.

In conclusion, SB678 is premature at this time and MTC members and Protect US Fishermen urge no further action on this concept currently. Much needs to occur before a discussion about community benefit agreements is held. MTC supports focusing on other bills such as HB2534 as a must-pass out of this legislative session so that all stakeholders can have a seat at the table as a comprehensive approach to planning for Oregon’s future energy needs (which includes offshore and onshore renewables) can be held. I would note that in California several years of work were invested in a community benefit agreement between a developer and fishermen. When the wind energy areas went out for lease auction, the developer did not win a lease, rendering all the years of work a waste of resources – let’s not squander Oregon’s resources having a premature discussion about community benefit agreements – that is not the best use of tax-payer dollars at this time.

Thank you for your consideration,



Heather Mann
Midwater Trawlers Cooperative

Current List of 2023 MTC Members

F/V Bay Islander	F/V Leslie Lee	F/V Muir Milach	F/V Predator
F/V Excalibur	F/V Lisa Melinda	F/V New Life	F/V Raven
F/V Excalibur II	F/V Majesty	F/V Nordic Star	F/V Sea Clipper
F/V Gold Rush	F/V Marathon	F/V Northern Ram	F/V Sea Storm
F/V Golden Pisces	F/V Michelle Renee	F/V Pacific	F/V Seadawn
F/V Grumpy J	F/V Miss Berdie	F/V pacific Future	F/V Seeker
F/V Hickory Wind	F/V Miss Sarah	F/V Pacific Ram	F/V Sunset Bay
F/V Jamie Marie	F/V Miss Sue	F/V Pegasus	F/V Winona J