Good afternoon, Thank you for taking my testimony

My name is Peggy Middaugh, and I am representing Unitarian Universalist Faith Action, a New Jersey faith based organization which supports 20 congregations statewide. Our faith is guided by a set of principles which include “respect for the interconnected web of all life of which we are a part”. That includes all living organisms both plant and animal.

I’d like to thank BOEM for this extensive DEIS, with all of its detail and the expertise it represents. Our volunteers have reviewed it in full. We support this project and ask you to approve the EIS and maintain the 45 day comment period ending July 5, 2023.

I testified at the previous hearing but would like to address concerns brought up there by quoting from a letter written by one of our members, Walt Nadolny. Walt has been a Professor of Marine Transportation at SUNY Maritime College for 17 years and a delegate to the International Maritime Organization’s Marine Environmental Protection Committee.

He states:

“As climate change continues to have a significant impact on aquatic life, policymakers are turning to the promise of renewable energy – including offshore wind – to help slow the pace of global warming, a benefit of which could mean saving aquatic species, including whales.

Already we’re beginning to see major consequences linked to rising ocean temperatures and sea levels as a result of climate change. These environmental disruptions are causing significant harm to whale populations by reducing their breeding habitat, disrupting migratory patterns, and diminishing krill populations on which they feed. Every year that goes by without significant emissions reductions brings us closer to a potential marine life mass extinction event.

Offshore wind could be important in reversing this trend. Each offshore wind farm will offset millions of metric tons of carbon emissions by reducing our reliance on carbon intensive forms of energy such as oil and gas.

Recently, some have argued that offshore wind development may harm whales, but the science is very clear that activities surrounding offshore wind energy are not responsible for a whale strandings and beachings. Federal officials overseeing offshore wind activities have quashed any link between the two since the first whale washed ashore last December.

As an expert in this field, I can confidently say that there is a near zero possibility that slow-going surveying vessels used for offshore wind development are responsible for these anomalous deaths. Offshore wind surveying vessels typically travel at 8-10 knots, slow enough to safely navigate among the sea life and too slow to harm a whale. But there has been a notable increase in vessel traffic along the East Coast, particularly around New York City, which just became the busiest shipping port in the US.

We need scientists to research whale beachings further so we can best protect endangered marine life. But in the interim it's important that policymakers, the media, and the public stick to the facts. And to date, the facts show that renewable energy projects like offshore wind will be instrumental in preventing whale deaths by reducing harmful carbon emissions that contribute to climate change - which will soon be the real mass killer of whales. "

Thank you.