

Theme 2: Offshore energy development

Theme 2 focused on the development of integrated and collaborative approaches to data collection and research to obtain a better understanding and address impacts of offshore energy development on marine mammals and the marine ecosystem.

Oil and gas and renewable energy development is occurring at different rates in different areas of the outer continental shelf, but considerable uncertainties exist regarding the biological significance of the effect of those activities on marine mammals. In cases where little or no information exists regarding potential effects of energy development on marine mammals, such as in the installation of commercial-scale wind farms, development should proceed slowly and be limited to areas of least potential harm to marine mammals.

Inter-agency, public-private, and joint industry partnerships are helping to direct research efforts to address data gaps, advance new technology, and synthesize available data through collaborative data collection and data sharing initiatives, both domestically and internationally. To facilitate such partnerships, mechanisms are needed that allow for easier movement of funds to and across agencies. Also critical are structures that ensure the scientific integrity and availability of research outputs.