PRESS RELEASE

First study of its kind: Pile driving for offshore wind farms has no negative effects on harbor porpoise population

Berlin, 7 October 2016. For the first time, a study comprehensively investigated the behavior of harbor porpoises during pile driving for offshore wind farms in the North Sea. "The study shows that offshore wind farms have no negative consequences for the harbor porpoise population," says Ursula Prall, chairwoman of the Offshore-Forum Windenergie (OFW). Indeed, despite constantly increasing foundation work, the porpoise population remained constant, and two subzones even saw an increase in the population throughout the course of the project, even though noise mitigation measures were just beginning to be developed and implemented during the study period.

In 2014, the OFW – together with several companies from the offshore wind energy sector and the German OFFSHORE WIND ENERGY Foundation – commissioned three research companies and institutes (BioConsult SH, IBL Umweltplanung, and IfAÖ) to study the disruptive effects of pile driving noise on harbor porpoises in the German exclusive economic zone of the North Sea. A number of wind farm operators and developers, who built eight offshore wind farms with a total of 400 foundations in the German Bight between 2009 and 2013 and/or are currently planning wind farms, provided details from studies conducted for the construction of the wind farms. The researchers also looked at porpoise counts for seven other projects being planned at the time.

Details of foundation installations, data from underwater noise measurements, and harbor porpoise population numbers determined via C-POD and aerial surveys served as the basis of the analyses. For the first time, a large amount of data from individual wind farm projects in the German Bight was collated in one joint database. This comprehensive dataset, the only of its kind in the world, was analyzed over the course of the two-year project period and summarized in a comprehensive study.

The results show that while pile driving occurs, the animals tend to avoid the area for a short time, with a clear distance-based gradient. This reaction was observed for all pile driving work with and without noise mitigation starting at 143 decibels (SEL) for a distance of up to 17 kilometers. When taking into account only pile driving with noise mitigation measures, the animals avoided only up to 14 kilometers around the area. Even in near areas with noise levels of more than 155 decibels (SEL), not all of the animals went elsewhere. Instances of porpoises becoming more or less sensitive as a result of increased pile driving in the studied time period were not observed or were observed only to a very small extent.

The study was commissioned by the Offshore-Forum Windenergie in cooperation with the following companies:

Dong Energy Wind Power A/S, EnBW Energie Baden-Württemberg AG, E.ON Climate and Renewables GmbH, Global Tech I Offshore Wind GmbH, Horizont II Renewable GmbH, Iberdrola Renovables Offshore Deutschland GmbH, Nordsee Offshore MEG I GmbH, Ocean Breeze Energy GmbH & Co. KG, Offshore Deutschland GmbH, Offshore Windpark RIFFGAT GmbH & Co. KG, OWP Butendiek GmbH & Co. KG, PNE WIND AG, innogy SE, STRABAG OW EVS GmbH, Tennet Offshore GmbH, Trianel Windkraftwerk Borkum GmbH & Co. KG, Vattenfall Europe Windkraft GmBH, WindMW GmbH, wpd offshore solutions GmbH, and the

German OFFSHORE WIND ENERGY Foundation

Media contacts:

Offshore-Forum Windenergie Foundation

Dr. Ursula Prall

Tel.: +49 40 34 10 69 100

E-mail: prall@ofw-online.de

German OFFSHORE WIND ENERGY

Sebastian Boie

Tel.: +49 30 27595198

E-mail: s.boie@offshore-stiftung.de