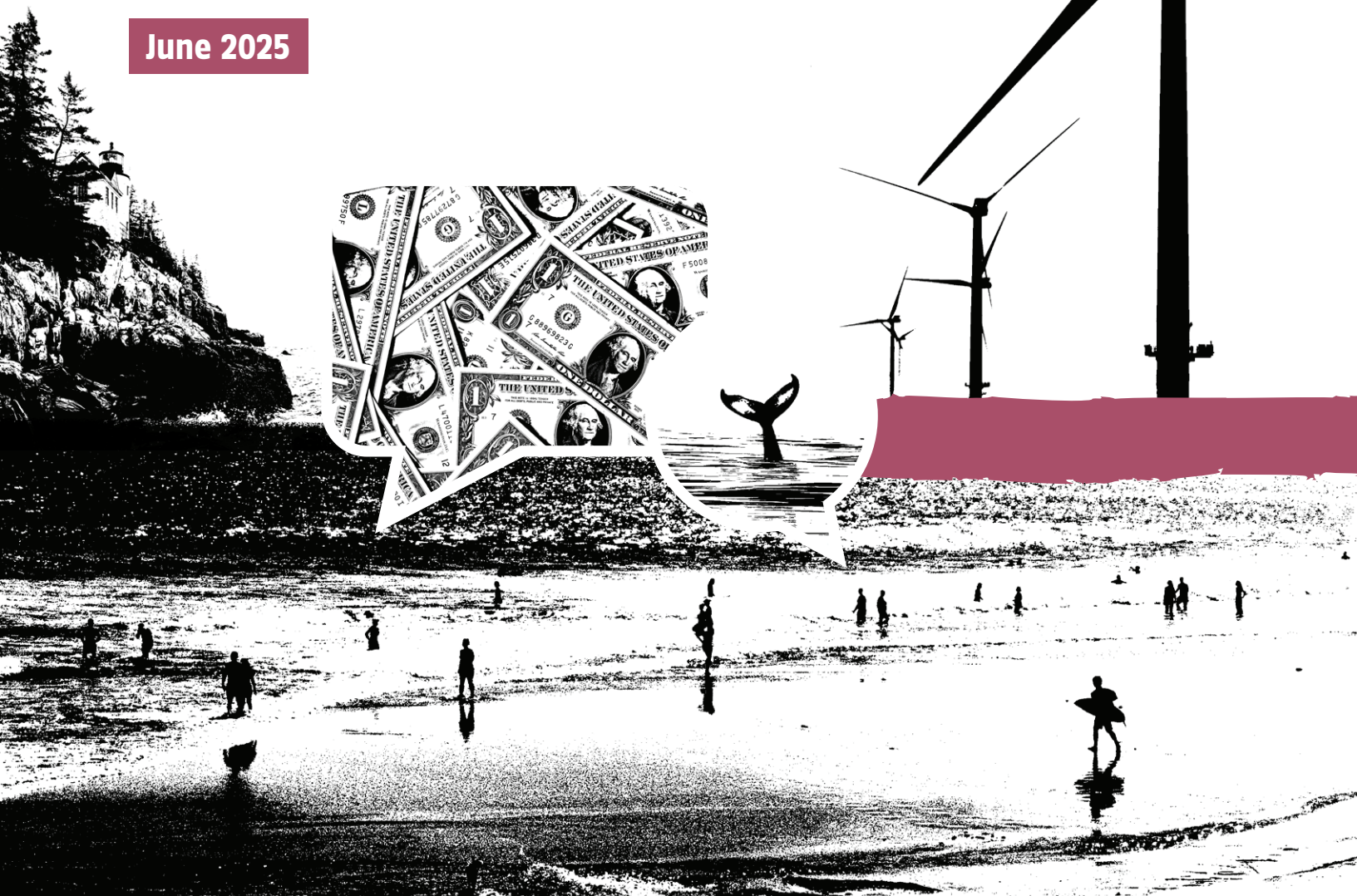


NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US: COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ABOUT OFFSHORE WIND

Report on People's Action Institute 2024 Deep Canvass
Campaigns on Offshore Wind Development

June 2025



**PEOPLE'S
ACTION**
INSTITUTE

THE NEW
CONVERSATION
INITIATIVE

NJRP

**MAINE
PEOPLE'S
RESOURCE
CENTER**



CLIMATE
ADVOCACY
LAB



Executive Summary

People's Action Institute worked with member affiliates New Jersey Resource Project (NJRP) and Maine People's Resource Center (MPRC) to conduct two deep canvassing projects focused on building community support for offshore wind power development. In the Spring and early Summer of 2024, canvassers from these organizations held conversations with over 1,400 local residents in Lacey Township, NJ and the Midcoast region of Maine combined. They found that community members' opinions towards offshore wind development were complicated, often rooted in limited prior knowledge and complex emotions about local identity and economic change. However, the practice of holding long-form, one-on-one conversations with participants through deep canvassing allowed both organizations to better understand community attitudes and persuade residents to support offshore wind development. In particular, canvassers found that situating development as an opportunity for delivering concrete local benefits – such as through a Community Benefits Agreement – attracted many participants and seemed to expand their senses of enthusiasm and community agency. Both NJRP and MPRC found their campaigns productive and empowering, both in terms of building organizational capacity through internal skills development and in providing a platform for further community engagement.

Background

People's Action Institute is a national network of local and state power-building organizations in 29 states, united to build a bigger “we.”

They build power among poor and working people in urban, rural, and suburban areas to win change through issue fights and elections -- this includes equipping everyday people to weather the climate crisis. In order to keep bills affordable, power reliable, and the world livable for future generations, Americans need an energy system where decisions are made in the best interests of people and the planet, rather than the fossil fuel industry. This includes promoting the development of offshore wind to reduce pollution and carbon emissions and create new economic opportunities.

Success for offshore wind projects depends on overcoming narratives that pit economic well-being against environmental safety – the false dichotomy of a paycheck versus planet. Communities on the frontline of extreme weather will only help transition American society to renewables if they can build popular support for such a transition. For that reason, strategies and tactics to counter misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda against clean energy are essential. People's Action Institute wanted to apply its track record of deep canvassing to offshore wind development, and share lessons learned with other stakeholders promoting clean, affordable and reliable energy.

People's Action Institute had previously used deep canvassing as an engagement and persuasion tactic¹ in a range of contexts, from elections to drivers licenses for undocumented immigrants. Beginning in 2022, they initiated a deep canvass to understand people's attitudes about the role of government to tackle climate change. The project did not aim to persuade climate change skeptics (who comprise a minority of Americans), but to understand people's emotions and thoughts about the climate crisis.

The initial round of field research in 2022 from Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin yielded encouraging results. In 19,000 conversations across five states, we found that voters feel the urgency of the climate crisis, but feel like it's too big to do anything about. Many people felt skeptical, hopeless or cynical that the government could solve big problems. Deep canvassing was most likely to succeed in moving folks when the scripts were adapted to local contexts and campaigns, combined with compelling calls to action and robust follow-up from the organization's end, complemented by other engagement tactics in a comprehensive campaign strategy, and consistently backed by a supportive leadership core. The next steps identified for the research program involved working with affiliates running local climate justice campaigns that wanted to invest in building deep canvassing programs.

1. <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/climate-change-in-the-american-mind-beliefs-attitudes-december-2022/>

Project descriptions

Two member affiliates of the People's Action Institute network – New Jersey Resource Project (NJRP) and Maine People's Resource Center (MPRC) – spearheaded the second iteration of the climate deep canvass. They wanted to understand local attitudes about offshore wind and assess whether and how deep canvass can address local opposition. Both groups have track records of powerful community organizing and both states are confronting live debates on deployment of utility-scale offshore wind, a key renewable energy source for the US to meet its climate policy goals. However, both cases present challenges when it comes to advocating for offshore wind development.

- **New Jersey:** The offshore wind industry has been steadily growing in New Jersey. One proposed project is to convert the decommissioned Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station in Lacey Township – once a major local economic driver – to a transmission facility connecting offshore wind farms to the on-shore grid. While proposals for such a facility are on-and-off, there is the expectation that development is coming. At the same time, fossil fuel interests have been actively messaging against offshore wind development,² including backing local anti-wind groups that exert powerful influence over shore culture and communities. In addition, the cancellation of Orsted's three major projects off the coast of New Jersey – and supply chain issues that have slowed the development and construction of the remaining projects – have built an atmosphere of uncertainty around when offshore wind is coming, if at all.
- **Maine:** Since 2019, the State of Maine has sought to build the first deepwater port on the East Coast to service the accelerating offshore wind industry. Supporters, including Maine Gov. Janet Mills, believe this port would provide long-term job creation, economic development, and a pathway for the state to reach its 2040 renewable energy goals. However, the choice of location for this deepwater port facility has been a matter of local controversy. A few notable conservation groups are vocally advocating against a site on Sears Island, the desired location of the Maine state government and other offshore wind energy supporters, which include environmental justice advocates, organized labor, and other environmental organizations.

2. Coastal areas of New Jersey have been targeted by anti-wind messaging from a number of conservative think tanks and astroturf groups, such as the Caesar Rodney Foundation-backed Protect Our Coast NJ. See <https://www.distilled.earth/p/the-man-trying-to-kill-americas-offshore> and <https://www.fastcompany.com/90856401/these-groups-fighting-offshore-wind-say-its-about-whales-but-theyre-funded-by-big-oil>

In each case, community organizers developed deep canvassing programs that included both internal and external goals. In terms of internal goals, both NJRP and MPRC wanted to use their deep canvassing program as a vehicle for skills building and leadership development. They hoped that by engaging in deep canvassing – especially with participants from differing political perspectives and positions – canvassers could build skills around listening, radical empathy, persuasion, and inoculation. Furthermore, both organizations sought to use the script iteration and messaging aspects of their campaigns as an opportunity to develop communications tools for similar renewable energy fights in other areas and contexts.

In terms of external goals, NJRP wanted to use deep canvassing as a social listening tool to better understand the positions of Lacey Township residents on offshore wind development at a closer level than just the loudest voices in the local discourse, which may be tainted by astroturfing from established anti-wind opponents. Over the course of the project, NJRP also sought to actively build community support for offshore wind development through their deep canvassing efforts and identify community needs and priorities in terms of how they might benefit. MPRC, having year-round canvassing infrastructure including a full-time canvass manager, went directly into persuasion work to build community support for siting the offshore wind port on Sears Island. In addition, both NJRP and MPRC wanted to educate their respective communities about the use of community benefit agreements to legally bind developers to provide certain negotiated benefits in exchange for community support.

The scripts for the two deep canvassing programs used a similar format, but diverged over time as each script was iterated and adapted to suit the needs of each particular community and organizing context. In general terms, conversations began with probing whether participants were familiar with plans for local offshore wind infrastructure development and asking for an initial rating of how the participant perceives the issue on a scale from totally unsupportive to totally supportive. NJRP used a 0-10 scale to measure support while MPRC used a 1-10 scale to measure support. Canvassers would then exchange stories with the participant about their thoughts on wind energy, their emotions about potential impacts on the local community, and their connection to the local geography, among other topics. Participants were then asked for a final rating on the same scale to measure any persuasive impact from the conversation, if any. Because NJRP began their campaign with a social listening focus, they only started collecting final ratings during the second half of their project.

Both NJRP and MPRC primarily relied on paid canvassers for their campaigns, using a mix of regular organizing staff, seasonal canvassers, and only a small number of volunteers. NJRP had some difficulty hiring canvassers at the outset of the campaign, but found some more success after an open volunteer day that allowed supporters a chance to try the tactic. MPRC staggered their recruitment and training of canvassers over three cycles. While NJRP exclusively canvassed door-to-door, MPRC used phone conversations to hone their script before moving to doors and periodically had to switch back to phone canvassing during periods of poor weather.

Data and summary statistics: New Jersey



Timeframe: March 26-June 9, 2024



344 conversations conducted
(267 complete, 77 partial)



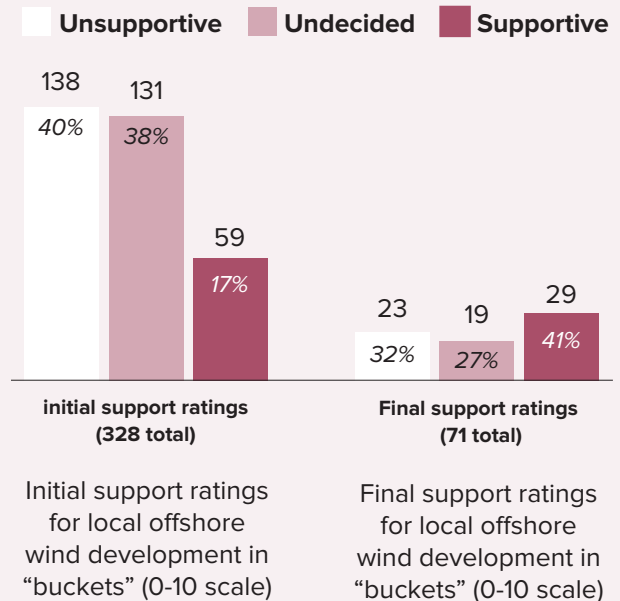
1,152 doors knocked across
18 individual canvassers



Population:

Residents of Lacey Township, NJ

NJRP canvassed all residents, irrespective of political party affiliation, ideology, income, ethnicity, or other factors



Note: NJRP spent the early part of their canvass on listening to community members identify core concerns rather than on persuasion. Along with attrition, this is why they gathered 328 initial support ratings and 70 final support ratings.

PERSUASION:

For the 70 participants who provided both an initial and final rating:



8 were Bucket Movers

(moved from one bucket of support to a higher bucket)



4 were Nudged

(increased their rating without moving buckets)



57 were No Change

(same initial and final ratings; 13 of these were at "10" both before and after)



1 was Negative

(decreased final rating from initial rating)

Party affiliation analysis for 275 participants matched to the voterfile:

Registered Democrats:



Registered Republicans:



Registered Independents:



Unsupportive Undecided Supportive



Most commonly cited CONCERNS:

Harm to wildlife/marine environment, in total (103)
Harm to whales, specifically (73)
Cost concerns (19)
Harm to fishing industries (15)



Most commonly cited BENEFITS:

Tax benefits (74)
School funding (67)
Public infrastructure/road improvements (29)
Other amenities (22)

Data and summary statistics: Maine



Timeframe:
February 22-July 8, 2024



12,612 attempts at deep canvass conversations across five individual canvassers



1,082 partial or complete conversations conducted (519 complete, 563 partial)



883 conversations conducted via door-to-door canvassing



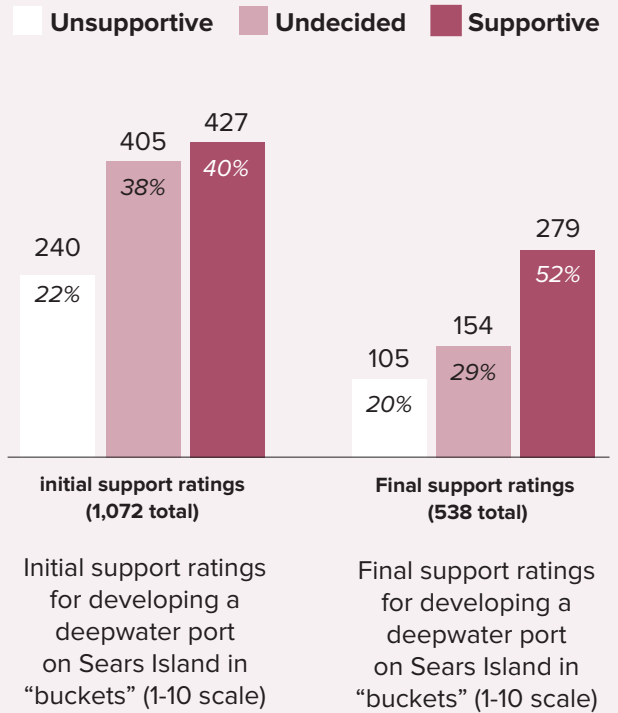
199 via phone-based canvassing



306 interactions marked as hostile or refused



Population:
Ideologically moderate to liberal residents of coastal Maine communities within 25 miles of Sears Island, including Bangor, Belfast, Hampden, and Searsport



Note: Like any type of canvassing interaction, not all conversations make it to the very end of the script. This attrition is why MPRC gathered 1,072 initial support ratings and 538 final support ratings.

PERSUASION:

For the 529 participants who provided both an initial and final rating:



149 were Bucket Movers
(moved from one bucket of support to a higher bucket)



136 were Nudged
(increased their rating without moving buckets)



238 were No Change
(same initial and final ratings; 44 of these were at "10" both before and after)



6 was Negative
(decreased final rating from initial rating)

NOTES

Throughout both deep canvassing campaigns, the scripts used in conversations continued to evolve over time based on video review and canvasser feedback. The quantitative analysis offered in this report does not take into account how the script evolved over time. While the scripts used by MPRC featured a 0-10 scale, it was coded as 1-10 in their data collection tool. As a result, this analysis does not compare group means between the NJRP and MPRC projects, but the qualitative assessment for totally unsupportive participants should not differ regardless of whether the lower end of the scale is set at 0 or 1. Due to non-random sampling in both NJ and ME campaigns, this analysis does not claim to be a representative portrayal of these communities in total.

Lessons learned



OFFSHORE WIND ATTITUDES

The following section summarizes lessons learned by NJRP and MPRC when it comes to how their local communities currently understand and approach the issue of offshore wind development.

New Jersey

NJRP canvassers found that most of the residents they spoke with had little previous knowledge of offshore wind energy. From their conversations, NJRP canvassers repeatedly mentioned that residents seemed unclear or ambivalent about offshore wind energy when pressed, suggesting that attitudes on offshore wind are weakly developed and that there is potential room for education, growth, and contributions of residents. For instance, 62 of 138 NJ participants who rated themselves as Unsupportive were still able to name potential benefits of offshore wind development, such as a stronger potential taxbase to help fund local schools facing budget cuts. A preliminary analysis of 275 participants matched to the voter file supports the notion that residents are movable on their attitudes towards offshore wind. Even broken down by partisanship, a sizable portion of registered Democrats (51%), Republicans (35%), and Independents (35%) in Lacey Township report fall into the Undecided category when it comes to the issue.

When residents did express resistance to offshore wind, they shared concerns about impacts on wildlife, consistent with anti-wind talking points that NJRP anticipated. For instance, the most common concern provided was the purported harms of the offshore wind industry on marine ecosystems in general

and whales in particular. This accusation – widely discredited – alleges that wind turbines injure or kill whales through a combination of installation traffic and sonar used during ocean mapping, while ignoring that the great majority of whale deaths are due to entanglements with fishing equipment and ship vessel strikes. At times, concerns about marine life seemed like the surface issue for deeper concerns about the changing identity of their coastal community.

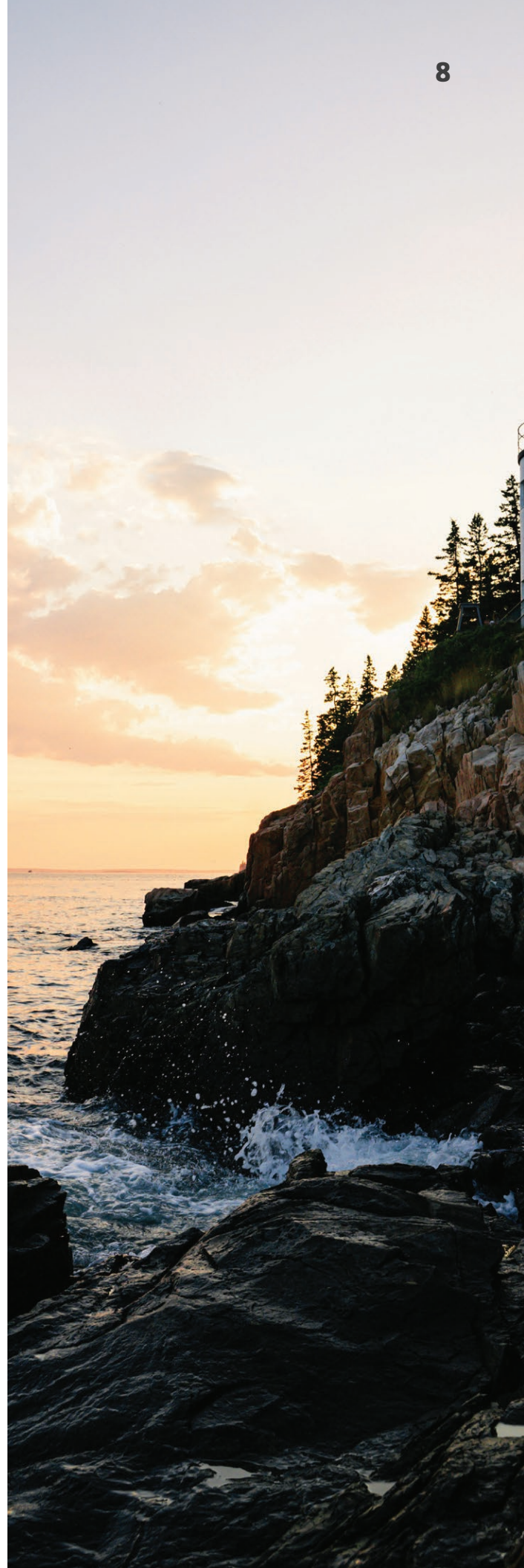
Participants also expressed a lack of local democratic governance when it came to a proposed wind power development, as if any large-scale project would be something done *to* Lacey Township as opposed to *with* them. Residents often stated that they feared big corporations or rich developers coming into their communities and acting with impunity, common concerns among Jersey Shore communities that have rapidly gentrified in recent years. Longtime Lacey Township residents reported that they had difficulty recognizing the place they grew up in due to increases in local population and volume of traffic. Offshore wind development was viewed as another extension of this trend of negative change, made without consideration or input from residents.

Maine

From previous experience working on the issue of offshore wind development, MPRC expected that Maine residents would be generally favorable towards offshore wind development for both environmental and economic reasons. This was largely borne out in the data, with 40% of conversation participants counting themselves as supportive of offshore wind development (score of 7-10) on their initial ratings. These positive perceptions and general level of knowledgeable ability have likely been buoyed by consistent support from governmental, business, academic, and civil society sources in the state in recent years.

However, coastal communities near the proposed deepwater facility in Searsport were ambivalent about the choice of Sears Island for the site – multiple participants referenced a local grassroots campaign to “Protect Sears Island” and some even said they were “10 (totally supportive) on wind energy but 0 for it on Sears Island.” This sharp contrast for many Mainers appears to derive from three sources: vital personal experiences hiking, fishing, and recreating on Sears Island; the public narrative that there exists a feasible alternative option on Mack Point, a local industrial site that is privately owned; and concern that large-scale economic changes would transform their communities for the worse.

Consequently, Maine residents contacted through this project seemed largely supportive of developing a deepwater port for offshore wind power in Searsport but also felt strong personal conflicts about the decision-making process and potential consequences for the likely venue on Sears Island. It was this internal tension that MPRC sought to alleviate through deep canvassing.





DEEP CANVASSING AS AN ENGAGEMENT TACTIC FOR OFFSHORE WIND DEVELOPMENT

The following section summarizes lessons learned by NJRP and MPRC on how deep canvassing can be used as an organizing tool to engage and persuade communities on the specific issue of offshore wind development.

New Jersey

Early on in their script iteration process, NJRP canvassers found that not leading with their personal stance on offshore wind at the outset of conversations led to more honest-feeling conversations about the positives and negatives of different forms of energy generation. Rather, they focused on residents' personal experiences with different forms of energy – including wind – and what residents wished was different about their town. By positioning themselves as a community organization that puts people first; organizes everyone regardless of their race, gender, class, or party affiliation; and doesn't take money from offshore wind developers, they were able to establish trust and credibility with the people they talked to.

NJRP found deep canvassing to be useful in better understanding Lacey Township residents' understanding (or lack thereof) of offshore wind energy development. For instance, it was clear to canvassers that many residents had at least been exposed to some of the opposition messaging against offshore wind energy, primarily when it comes to interference with marine ecosystems and whale populations. But these concerns did not seem to be deeply developed, with many participants unable to provide more details or evidence to back up their assertions. NJRP organizers found that residents were eager for

more high-quality information once a rapport had been built during their conversations, frequently asking for more reference material like handouts or other literature.

Canvassers did not run into much economic opposition to developing an offshore wind terminal, which NJRP attributed to the community's familiarity with the previous local nuclear power facility. Indeed, many participants seemed open to the economic benefits of offshore wind industry investment in their community based on their prior experience with the former Oyster Creek plant. Given that substantial shares of participants fell into the Undecided bucket regardless of partisanship, deep canvassing seems like it could be an effective engagement tactic to help build and solidify local support for offshore wind development.

While Lacey Township residents were eager to learn about potential local benefits from offshore wind development, they did not appear to have a strong sense of how to engage with or shape any oncoming project. When policy matters came up in conversations, whether about school budget cuts, housing development, or state and national politics, participants seemed to treat them as things done to the local community without much community agency

or governance. NJRP were able to push back against this narrative by bringing up positive examples of how other coastal communities have been able to win significant local benefits from offshore wind development, including local infrastructure improvements. NJRP were able to attract resident interest in a potential offshore wind project and make them feel more empowered to support it by framing it as an economic opportunity to fill in funding gaps and help the community prosper, with a CBA as an efficacious vehicle for the community's voice.

Maine

MPRC found deep canvassing to be an effective method of persuading coastal Mainers on the Sears Island siting issue, but only after adapting their conversation script to the needs of their participants. At first, the MPRC script was focused on talking about climate change impacts and the need for offshore wind deployment, but pointedly avoided bringing up Sears Island for fear of the sensitivity around the location. However, they found that this approach misunderstood where Mainers they talked with were on the issue – these participants were, in large part, already concerned about climate change, pro-wind energy, and strongly aware of the local controversy surrounding the state government's choice of site for the proposed deepwater port. From that point on, canvassers focused less on climate change and began to ask about residents' personal experiences of economic change and stories of exploring Sears Island in order to better ground the conversation in honesty and transparency. The script changed in response to the actual flow of feedback at the doors.

Their next breakthrough came from better understanding the internal conflict within local residents when it came to developing a deepwater port on Sears Island. Participants struggled with their pro-climate attitudes on wind energy on the one hand and what industrial development on Sears Island would mean for their local communities on the other hand. Often this concern was couched in sentiments that residents did not “want to be NIMBY” when it came to climate solutions. MPRC decided to lean into this line of inquiry as a way to open up further conversation. By validating the concerns that residents expressed – that offshore wind development would likely mean changes to their community's economic and cultural makeup and that these were legitimate concerns – MPRC were able to neutralize participants' instinctive defensiveness. This made participants feel listened to without judgment and more comfortable talking through the implications of such changes.

This often meant working with participants to acknowledge the complexity of the issue and reject wishful thinking that policy solutions need to be delivered in simple ways. Through exchanging stories about economic change and feelings of social belonging, canvassers were able to help participants parse their complicated feelings about the prospect of external economic forces like the offshore wind industry disrupting their local communities. For some residents, bringing up the example of the financial services company MBNA previously moving into Belfast, ME was a positive touchstone; while the company's introduction to the coastal community did bring change, there were notable positive

outcomes such as job growth and a new library building. Centering the beneficial possibilities of outside investment shifted the tone of the conversations away from fear and towards hope.

Once MPRC canvassers were able to establish rapport and ease residents' anxiety about the topic of offshore wind development, they could move to persuasion. For many Mainers, the siting issue has felt like a toss up between Sears Island and Mack Point, likely due to opposition messaging. However, this perspective ignores the many indications from the state government that a deepwater facility on Sears Island is the much stronger eventuality. Solidifying that concept in the minds of participants – that this project is likely to happen and they should prepare for it –

helped some participants better come to terms with the prospect.

To establish a theme of community agency, MPRC canvassers found success by bringing up CBAs and the opportunity of negotiating with wind developers for specific local improvements and benefits. By informing residents of the existence of CBAs and how they work, MPRC canvassers were able to make a positive case for siting the port on Sears Island that was grounded in community control, agency, and local governance power. This line of conversation could then dovetail into a Call to Action or, in this case, a more favorable impression of a facility on Sears Island as measured in a deep canvass final rating.

Photo by Jesse de Meulenaere on Unsplash





DEEP CANVASSING AS AN ORGANIZING TOOL

The following section summarizes lessons learned by NJRP and MPRC when it comes to the use of deep canvassing as an organizing tool in general, absent of specific issue focus.

New Jersey

Canvassers in New Jersey were enthusiastic about jumping into deep canvassing again, having run a similar type of campaign on the overdose crisis in 2023. Over the course of a number of trainings overseen by Steve Deline of the New Conversation Initiative and People's Action Institute's Deep Canvass Institute, NJRP staffers were coached on deep canvassing procedures and, importantly, the mindset of radical empathy needed to listen deeply to participants' stories and share their own.

NJRP organizers and members hold a broad range of beliefs, one of which is to put conversations about issues above politics. However, a structured opposition to offshore wind has emerged in New Jersey over the last decade, shaping the once nearly-nonexistent discussion around wind turbines into a charged, politicized, and highly publicized issue on both sides of the aisle. In the weeks preceding the canvass, local public meetings on offshore wind development had devolved into shouting matches and threats of violence. Alongside a tense and contentious media environment, this gave NJRP organizers cause to be concerned that they would face an overwhelmingly negative response on the doors.

However, they found the process of sharing personal reflections and building

relationships to be empowering and confidence-boosting, even when speaking with participants who were unsupportive of offshore wind development. Often, they found Lacey Township locals to be warm and responsive. Residents' appreciation for NJRP's organizational values – they do not accept funding from developers – and their shared identities as “Sandy Survivors” also helped bridge divides.³ The practice of listening and building common connections – while simultaneously delivering factual information about offshore wind – made the campaign feel like a success.

While NJRP did not approach this deep canvassing project with a base-building mission, they have been able to use their outreach in Lacey Township as a jumping off point for further engagement with this coastal community, including in followup mailers and local media coverage that explained their presence in local neighborhoods.

The training they received from the Deep Canvass Institute stressed the importance of listening, an essential organizing skill that they've been able to utilize in their other campaigns. Canvassers reported learning how to ask questions in different ways to better connect with community members. Each conversation was a learning experience that was used to inform later conversations.

3. NJRP was founded in the wake of Hurricane Sandy's impact on coastal NJ in 2012.

Overall, the deep canvassing project seemed to be empowering and efficacious for NJRP, with organizers eager to continue the campaign and go further in exploring the persuasive benefits of deep canvassing. The experience also developed internal leadership skills among existing organizers, with a youth canvasser stepping into a leadership role on the offshore wind team following the campaign.

There is incredible uncertainty for the future of offshore wind in New Jersey and throughout the United States, but NJRP believes the only way that offshore wind will happen is through meeting people where they're at and talking through their thoughts, feelings, and dreams for their communities.

Maine

MPRC were experienced with deep canvassing, having deployed the tactic in a previous campaign advocating for healthcare access for immigrants. They used this offshore wind campaign as an opportunity to develop their team's skills and practice with radical empathy, listening, and deepening their connection with local communities. Similar to NJRP, they found the experience to be largely positive and affirming – MPRC canvassers recalled being received positively due to their organization's track record advocating for pollution cleanup. Some have even continued to be recognized in the communities they canvassed and drawn into further conversations on offshore wind development.

Once MPRC overcame their initial preconceptions that they should talk about offshore wind development through an environmental lens, they accepted the need to lean into the discomfort and narrative complexity of discussing larger themes of economic change. However, this approach paid dividends for them in terms of breaking down participants' emotional barriers to engage, share, and learn more about the Sears Island project. This in turn led to deeper engagement not only on this subject, but also larger issues of community engagement and grassroots power-building, such as through the vehicle of a CBA. MPRC came out of this campaign experience eager to do more deep canvassing.

At least in the case of the Maine deep canvassing program, there were no observed statistically significant differences in the type of canvassing (either at the door or via phone) with persuasion. In other words, having an in-person conversation or a phone conversation with a participant did not meaningfully increase that person's final rating about the proposed wind power port from their initial rating. However, in-person outreach did seem to result in a much better response rate compared to phone outreach. The ratio of successful conversations to interactions marked refused, disconnected, and hostile was over 5:1 for door-to-door interactions compared to 2:5 for phone-based outreach.

Best practices on deep canvassing on offshore wind development

- Be prepared for (possibly lengthy) script iteration to find an effective way to engage participants. This process may involve shuffling around, introducing, or replacing conversation topics, and should be aided by canvasser feedback and audio-visual recordings where possible. As an illustration, MPRC learned they needed to put economic change front and center on their third script iteration and explicitly acknowledge NIMBY concerns as legitimate on their final ninth iteration.
- Hire and train canvassers at the beginning of the project. MPRC noted that their staggered recruitment model slowed down the process of training and building experience, and would have preferred to train everyone at the same time in hindsight. In the future, NJRP would hold their open volunteer day before they try to hire canvassers to see if hesitant supporters could have an opportunity to try deep canvassing around offshore wind before they commit to a full fellowship.
- Organizational reputation matters in terms of getting people to talk. MPRC mentioned how positive name recognition and knowledge of past wins helped in terms of getting participants to take them and their script seriously. Local residents in Lacey Township were less aware of NJRP but said they appreciated their roots in the region and multi-issue approach to politics.
- During their projects, NJRP and MPRC employed canvassers who were local residents of coastal New Jersey and Maine, respectively. While non-locals may be effective deep canvassers in certain conditions, canvassers who hold firsthand connections to the communities they engage likely bring additional authenticity, relatability, and credibility to their conversations.
- Train canvassers on how to listen without jumping into debunking, debating, and persuasion. One of deep canvassing's strengths is the opportunity to engage with constituents in a manner that cultivates trust and vulnerability. This mitigates the defensiveness, motivated reasoning, and cheap arguments that can hamper conversations about politics. By listening in a spirit of radical acceptance and validating the concerns of participants, canvassers are able to more effectively tailor their arguments to their audience's needs. These skills can then be deployed usefully in non-deep canvassing interactions as well.
- Community Benefit Agreements seem to be an effective talking point when it comes to clean energy infrastructure development, providing a tangible and powerful means for local communities to win positive outcomes. In addition, the necessary manner of collectivizing community voice provides a sense of community agency, efficacy, and governance power that can potentially carry over to other democratic power-building efforts.⁴

4. See this example of a Community Benefits Agreement for developing an offshore wind terminal in Salem, MA that will contribute nearly \$9 million to local community services: <https://www.salemma.gov/mayors-office/news/city-salem-and-crowley-wind-services-announce-historic-community-benefits>

- From the Maine campaign, there is no evidence of statistical difference between door-to-door and phone-based deep canvassing outside of response rate. Therefore, deep canvassing may be more flexible for organizations depending on campaign goals, canvasser availability, and list size. However, phone-based deep canvassing may not generate the positive downstream reputational effects seen by NJRP and MPRC following their campaigns given the lack of direct face-to-face contact.
- Deep canvassing campaigns provide a strong platform for organizations to further progress their issue advocacy given the depth of communications learning they collect. Following up with canvassed communities in the form of continued contacts, updates about the campaign, and potentially recruitment can situate deep canvassing as a core component of an organization's base-building strategy.

Photo by Bob Brewer on Unsplash



Acknowledgements

Report Author: Jack Zhou, Climate Advocacy Lab



Thank you to our funders for investing in community organizing to put people and planet first. Eboni Taggart assisted in training affiliates to run the deep canvass, Sondra Youdelman and Sophia Cheng managed the project.



Steve Deline and the NCI team trained and coached both New Jersey and Maine teams.



Acknowledgements to Dr. Amy Williams, Kataluna Buenvenida, Jody Stewart, Shiloh Estacio-Touhey, Cameron Foster, Shannon Duffy, Erin Fitzsimmons, Murphy Boccher, Elissa Tierney, Leanna Jones and Amanda Deveck-Rinear from New Jersey Resource Project.



Acknowledgements to Jordan Sligar, Finlee Leboufe, Thomas Poling, Bridget Surber and Logan Massara.



The principal author of the report, responsible for writing and data analysis, is Jack Zhou from the Climate Advocacy Lab.

**PEOPLE'S
ACTION
INSTITUTE** |