



CT Roundtable on Climate & Jobs



Offshore Wind: CT Jobs & Clean Energy

Comments Regarding
2017 Draft Comprehensive Energy Strategy
September 2017

We are participants in the statewide CT Roundtable on Climate and Jobs, which includes labor unions, community organizations, religious groups, businesses and environmental groups. We are deeply concerned about the need to build a sustainable economy with good-paying jobs here in Connecticut while reducing the threat of climate disruption here and around the world. We believe that state policies like the Comprehensive Energy Strategy (CES) present an important opportunity to address both the economic crisis and the climate crisis.

We reject the false choice of “jobs vs. the environment.” We seek to build a worker-oriented environmental movement organizing to secure a fair and just transition that protects not only the environment, but also the livelihoods of working families. A robust climate protection program will create tens of thousands of new jobs in CT, but the transition to a clean-energy economy will also displace some workers. Workers making the difficult transition to alternative work deserve well-paid, secure jobs with benefits and the right to union representation.

The final CES should ensure alignment of the state’s energy strategies with its mandated climate goals while envisioning a clean energy future that prioritizes local economic development and job creation.

Rhode Island's Block Island Wind Farm has made offshore wind a reality in New England. Construction of the 30-MW facility employed 300 union workers, including some Connecticut workers from Local 478 of the International Union of Operating Engineers. The Block Island project also generated substantial economic activity for local ports and communities.

Other states in the region, including Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey and Maryland, are aggressively pursuing offshore wind development. Massachusetts has issued a request for proposals for up to 400 MW of offshore wind from federal waters south of Nantucket and Martha’s Vineyard, as the first step in meeting a mandated procurement of 1600 MW by 2027. The scale of this **offshore wind development presents an enormous economic opportunity for Connecticut’s deepwater ports, coastal communities and workers, but Connecticut is decidedly lagging its neighboring states in making offshore wind an integral part of its long-term energy and economic development strategies.**

The draft CES notes that legislation passed this year (Public Act 17-144) provides the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) the authority to procure a modest amount of offshore wind energy. Rather than including any recommendation that Connecticut take advantage of even that limited authority, however, the CES instead dismisses offshore wind potential with the unsubstantiated and inaccurate statement that it is “likely very expensive, or is in northern New England in areas that do not have adequate transmission facilities to move the power to load centers in southern New England” (p. 15).

The final CES should chart a path to securing a share of the regional economic and environmental benefits from offshore wind.

1. Accurately assess the potential economic co-benefits of offshore wind development:

- Clarify that offshore wind resources are available in southern New England in pre-designated federal lease areas off the coast of Massachusetts and Rhode Island and thus not hampered by inadequate transmission facilities in northern New England.
- Acknowledge that the current cost differential between offshore wind resources and cheaper sources of electric power would be mitigated by the substantial co-benefits in local economic activity and job creation, in contrast with other resources like imported hydropower.

2. Recommend a more aggressive Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS):

- The draft CES includes a modest expansion in the RPS, with annual increases of 1% beyond 2020 to require 30% Class I renewables by 2030.
- An offshore wind procurement mandate should become a centerpiece of a more aggressive RPS target of at least 40% by 2030, enhancing the in-state economic benefits of the RPS and putting Connecticut solidly on track to meet its mandated climate goals.

3. Identify offshore wind development as the priority replacement strategy for Millstone:

- Highlight the advantages of offshore wind development in planning for the eventual retirement of the Millstone nuclear facility rather than focusing entirely on large-scale hydropower as a carbon-free alternative.
- Construction and maintenance of offshore wind facilities in federal waters off the coast of southern New England could provide alternative long-term economic activity and employment opportunities for coastal communities and workers after Millstone’s retirement, while avoiding the costly (and uncertain) construction of international transmission lines.

By taking advantage of lessons learned from neighboring states, Connecticut can develop a robust offshore wind strategy that leverages our modern port facilities and skilled labor pool to capture a share of the benefits of this emerging regional resource.

We urge the CT DEEP to revise the draft Comprehensive Energy Strategy to include an aggressive approach to procuring offshore wind energy as an essential component of the state’s clean energy future.

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