



Natural Resources Council of Maine

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Testimony in Support of LD 2266, An Act Regarding Offshore Wind Terminals Located in Coastal Sand Dune Systems

**To the Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources
by Jack Shapiro, Climate and Clean Energy Program Director
March 18, 2024**

Senator Brenner, Representative Gramlich, members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Jack Shapiro — I am the Climate and Clean Energy Director at the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM). I'm here today to testify in support of LD 2266, An Act Regarding Offshore Wind Terminals Located in Coastal Sand Dune Systems.¹

On behalf of our 30,000 members and supporters, NRCM has been working for more than 60 years to protect, restore, and conserve Maine's environment. And right now we believe that we cannot meaningfully do that work without addressing the threat of climate change. As we have seen in stark relief this winter, climate change is the biggest threat to our woods, waters, wildlife and communities.

Maine has a plan to address climate change. One of the best comprehensive climate plans in the country. Its core strategy is to transition our energy use toward Maine-based renewable energy for the electricity we use, and how we heat our homes and businesses, and fuel our vehicles — and away from burning dirty expensive fossil fuels from outside Maine.

Offshore wind is an essential part of this clean energy future. The Gulf of Maine has some of the strongest, most consistent winds in the world, and offshore wind is expected to generate about half of the renewable energy we need as a state by the end of the next decade.² There is no substitute with anything close to that potential for Maine.

LD 2266 modifies a section of Maine's Wind Energy Act to allow the permitting of an offshore wind port in a coastal sand dune system as long as all other permitting criteria are met. This bill arises because there is a sand dune system at the proposed offshore wind port site on Sears Island.

¹ <https://legislature.maine.gov/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=HP1456&item=1&num=131>

² See Appendix A.

The committee is undoubtedly aware of the difficult decision being weighed around the location of Maine's offshore wind port in Searsport between the existing Mack Point terminal and Sears Island.

This bill does not prevent the full state and federal permitting process from moving forward, or the evaluation of the full alternatives analysis of both sites. But in the event that the Mack Point site is not suitable for supporting the full-scale commercial development of floating offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine or is otherwise not the best choice when all factors are considered, we have to preserve the possibility of building this port on Sears Island to move offshore wind forward, which is what this bill allows.

The importance of constructing a floating offshore wind port in Maine can't be overstated. Offshore wind isn't just a source of renewable energy, it is a once-in-a-century economic development opportunity for our state. Thousands of jobs for Maine people, and hundreds of millions of dollars in investment in our communities are at stake.³ Nearly all those benefits rely on a port in Maine. Because no other port for *floating* wind is being considered on the east coast, without a port floating offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine — with all of its climate, energy price stabilization, economic, and jobs benefits — could be delayed by a decade or more.

Sand dunes are an important and rare habitat in Maine, and in line with the principles of responsible development of offshore wind and an offshore wind port embodies in the legislature's recent action in support of offshore wind, it is critical that if an exemption is granted through this bill, that compensation should be required. We understand that there are some specific solutions that may come forward, and we look forward to supporting those solutions as the legislative process goes ahead.

Offshore wind is essential for Maine to address climate change. Building a port is an indispensable step in developing offshore wind, and benefiting from this generational economic opportunity for Maine's future. This bill preserves the possibility of developing what could be the best site for Maine's offshore wind port.

We hope the Committee will vote Ought to Pass.

Thanks for the opportunity to testify, and I would be happy to try to answer any questions you have.

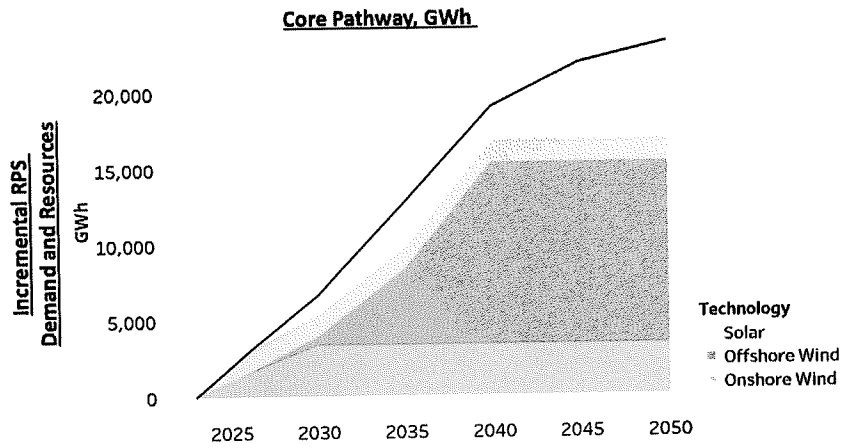
³ DNV prepared a socioeconomic analysis for the Maine Offshore Wind Roadmap found that the development of the first 1,600 MW of offshore wind in Maine would generate \$114M - \$362M in economic activity from construction, and \$36M - \$133M in economic activity every year from ongoing operations and maintenance. Maine would also experience up to 33,000 short-term and 13,000 long-term jobs from the offshore wind build out. <https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/inline-files/Maine%20OSW%20DNV%20Socioeconomic%20Analysis%20of%20Offshore%20Wind%20in%20the%20Gulf%20of%20Maine%20Final%20Report.pdf>

Appendix A

RESULTS

Maine's Incremental Clean Generation Needs

Currently contracted/committed resources meet most of Maine's incremental 2040 clean energy needs*



* In-service dates are estimated

DRAFT RESULTS