



Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

May 4, 2021

RE: LD 101, An Act to Prohibit Offshore Wind Development

Dear Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to LD 101, An Act to Prohibit Offshore Wind Development, on behalf of Maine Audubon and our 30,000 members and supporters.

Maine Audubon opposes this legislation because we believe that offshore wind development will help keep Maine on a path toward meeting climate goals necessary to protect Maine's wildlife and wildlife habitat. The incredible promise of offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine means that the state could power our homes and our economy with renewable, locally-produced energy and move away from dirty fossil fuels.

More than a century of burning fossil fuels has altered the chemical composition of our atmosphere, changing the climate we are accustomed to and throwing the natural world out of balance. Mainers are seeing these changes firsthand, as evidenced by scientifically-measured +3 degree warming trend in the state since 1895, a growing season that has lengthened by about 16 days since 1950, and a Gulf of Maine that is warming faster than almost any other water body on Earth.

These changes are impacting our wildlife. Moose populations are falling as the warmer winters are permitting the advancement of deadly ticks. Traditionally Southern species are showing up in Maine woods and waters, including Carolina Wren, Black Sea Bass, Lined Seahorse, and Red-bellied Woodpecker. Modeling reports from the National Audubon Society predict that if the current rate of warming continues, more than 106 of Maine's bird species will lose habitat in the state by 2050, and some, like our iconic Common Loon, will be pushed out of their breeding range entirely.

We need to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, or else Maine will no longer be Maine. At the top of the list of ways to achieve this is to convert to electric energy powered by renewable sources. Maine Audubon is a long-time supporter of renewable energy, dating to at least the 1970s when our Falmouth headquarters was built with passive solar and radiant heat, to our current work

supporting thoughtfully-sited solar and terrestrial wind projects. The potential for offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine, especially floating offshore wind, is far greater than any other source, with an estimated 156 gigawatts of energy available for conversion per year. To put that in perspective, that is more than 70 times the amount of electricity used by the entire state of Maine in an entire year.

The opportunity to produce such a large amount of clean, renewable energy locally cannot be ignored, and deserves full study. We understand that the buildout of floating offshore wind -- still an experimental technology -- would have impacts on both environmental resources and human use of the oceans, but we owe it to ourselves and to future Mainers to make every effort to meet our climate goals. Advancements in locally developed and deployed floating offshore wind technology will also provide employment and economic benefits to the state and will provide Maine with the opportunity to lead the nation into the future.

Of course, Maine Audubon insists that any deployment of turbines in the Gulf of Maine are done so with the utmost care for wildlife. A good amount of research has been done on the impact to wildlife from offshore wind facilities, however, much of that research is outdated, applicable only to past technologies, or otherwise non-transferable to making thoughtful location and management decisions in the Gulf of Maine. A great deal more work must be done to understand and plan for avoiding or minimizing impacts to wildlife from offshore wind. To date, Maine Audubon has been pleased with the state's efforts to gather this information, including the state's pursuit of an offshore wind research array in the Gulf. The proposed research array, on its current trajectory, stands to be a critical resource for understanding how to balance offshore wind with wildlife impacts.

Maine Audubon is eager to continue to work with the state to better understand the potential impacts of floating offshore wind turbines on migratory birds and other wildlife in the Gulf of Maine, and incorporate what we learn into future siting and operation decisions. We owe it to ourselves, our wildlife, and future generations to move forward with this promising technology.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to LD 101.

Sincerely,



Nick Lund
Outreach and Network Manager
Maine Audubon