



**Testimony before the
Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee
Sean Mahoney
Conservation Law Foundation
May 11, 2021**

Re: LD 336 – An Act To Encourage Research To Support the Maine Offshore Wind Industry

Good morning Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee. My name is Sean Mahoney, Executive Vice President for Conservation Law Foundation, testifying in support of LD 336, An Act To Encourage Research to Support the Maine Offshore Wind Industry. CLF uses the law, science, and economics to address the challenges and opportunities presented by the climate crisis here in Maine and across New England.

As Maine’s climate action plan makes clear, meeting the climate crisis here in Maine will require moving away from oil and methane gas not only as a source for electricity but also as the sources for both heating and cooling our buildings and for transporting people and goods. Doing so will require a transformation of our current electric system, in terms of how we generate that electricity as well as how it is transmitted and stored.

As recognized in that climate action plan, *Maine Won’t Wait*, p. 58, the development of offshore wind in the waters of the Gulf of Maine holds great economic and environmental promise. That is not a new recognition, as the Legislature reached that same conclusion almost two decades ago when it enacted the Maine Wind Energy Act – “Renewable energy resources within the State and in the Gulf of Maine have the potential, over time, to provide enough energy for the State’s homeowners and businesses to reduce their use of oil and liquid petroleum-fueled heating systems by transition to alternative, renewable energy-based heating systems and to reduce their use of petroleum-fueled motor vehicles by transition to electric-powered motor vehicles. Electrification of heating and transportation has potential to increase the State’s energy independence, to help stabilize total residential and commercial energy bills and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.” 35 M.R.S.A. § 3402(1)(c).

In order to ensure that offshore wind is developed in a manner that achieves that promise with the least amount of impact on existing resources and public uses in the Gulf of Maine, the Legislature and Public Utilities Commission have approved of a demonstration project comprised of 1 floating offshore wind turbine by a consortium led by our flagship University of Maine in the waters off Monhegan Island. It is also why Governor Mills and her administration are pursuing the development of a larger research array of up to 12 offshore wind turbines in the federal waters of the Gulf of Maine. And it is why just last week you heard testimony on a

proposal by Governor Mills to enact a 10-year moratorium on the development of any additional offshore windpower projects in Maine’s territorial waters. Developing the offshore wind resource right is critical to its success.

While you have heard the litany of the impacts of the climate crisis on our economy and environment in connection with your work this year, it is worth repeating a few of them, as set forth by the more than 50 scientists from around the state who made up the Maine Climate Council’s Scientific and Technical Subcommittee:¹

- Maine will need to plan for 1.5 feet of relative sea level rise by 2050 (and perhaps up to double that amount); even 1 foot of sea rise would result in a 10-fold increase in coastal flooding in Maine in the next 30 years.
- Similarly, the Gulf of Maine has experienced a strong warming trend over the last 15 years and is warming faster than 99% of the world's oceans.
- Under all climate scenarios the climate (30-year average) of the Gulf of Maine will continue to warm through at least 2050.
- The best case for Maine by 2050 is that the southern Maine coast will have an ocean climate similar to what Rhode Island has today; if carbon emissions aren’t sufficiently reduced, even the waters of Downeast Maine will feel like Rhode Island.
- These ocean temperature trends are very concerning for Maine’s fisheries; it is already causing the Gulf of Maine ecosystem to begin losing its subarctic characteristics that support species important to fish like herring and cod.
- The Gulf of Maine Research Institute has predicted a 62% drop in the Gulf’s lobster population by 2050.

We have heard the fishing community’s fears about what offshore wind means for their livelihoods. But as a recent Press Herald editorial put it, fishermen “should be thinking about the future they want, within the reality we all should acknowledge. They should be thinking about how climate change is changing their industry, and what responsibility they have in being part of the solution.... With their experience in the ocean off Maine, lobstermen should be a big part of the conversation. But they have to be prepared to say something besides ‘no.’”²

And as you heard last week from Rich Silkman during his testimony on L.D. 101: “Simply put – without off-shore wind generation from large wind farms in the Gulf of Maine, Maine cannot meet its emission targets.”

¹ [“Scientific Assessment of Climate Change and Its Effects in Maine”](#)

² “Our View: Lobster industry has more to add to wind discussion than ‘Crush Mills’,” Portland Press Herald, April 30, 2021.

L.D. 336 provides the Public Utilities Commission the authority necessary to move the research array in federal waters forward and allow Maine to gather the objective data necessary to make sure that the development of the offshore wind resources in the Gulf of Maine meet the promise of providing significant amounts of clean renewable energy while also protecting our natural resources and the public uses of those resources. Conservation Law Foundation supports LD 336 and urges you to do so as well. Thank you.