

For Immediate Release

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NY Daily News: Offshore wind is ready for its closeup: New York needs to build out its capacity now, by Joe Martens

Offshore wind is ready for its closeup: New York needs to build out its capacity now

By Joe Martens

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As the extreme weather event and deadly flash-flooding in New York City underscored, we need to act with a sense of urgency to deal with our current climate reality and a significant expansion of offshore wind in New York and beyond should be a key ingredient in the recipe for success at mitigation and resilience moving forward.

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Yes, as director of New York’s Offshore Wind Alliance, I have a vested interest in supporting wind power. But my cheerleading isn’t self-interest; it’s grounded in science.

President Biden recognized the vital role wind will play in digging us out of the climate hole we’re in when, in June, his administration announced its intention to auction eight lease areas to

develop offshore wind farms on more than 600,000 acres in the shallow waters between Montauk Point and Cape May — an area known as the New York Bight.

Since New York state law requires that 70% of our electricity comes from renewable sources by 2030, opening these waters to offshore wind development is crucial to getting us there. But auctioning these lease areas is only the beginning of a long regulatory process and holds no guarantee that wind farms will be built. Commercial fishing interests continue to fight projects in existing lease areas and are resisting new ones. And other marine interests want to nibble away at the proposed lease areas before they are finalized later this year.

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) did its homework before designating the eight new proposed lease areas and carefully considered data and information it received while formulating the wind energy areas in the New York Bight. Based on this information, they reduced the size of the lease areas substantially to avoid sensitive fishing areas, navigation lanes and other ocean user interests. It even eliminated, for now, two areas known as Fairways North and South, off the coast of Long Island.

BOEM's plan is far-sighted and comprehensive. It would unlock over seven gigawatts of wind energy — enough to power more than 2.5 million homes — and create thousands of good-paying union jobs. A 2020 study by Wood Mackenzie, a global energy consulting firm, estimated that development of the New York Bight wind energy areas would support 32,300 development and construction jobs annually from 2025-2030, generate \$183 million in state tax revenue and nearly \$46 billion in overall economic activity.

Importantly, the proposed new lease areas are sufficiently large enough to accommodate the number of wind turbines necessary for New York and New Jersey to meet their respective offshore wind targets of 9,000 and 7,500 megawatts by 2035.

It's no secret that traditional fossil-fuel-fired power plants are often located in or near communities of color, exposing residents to high levels of pollutants that adversely affect public health and lower property values. Ironically, now that siting optimization for offshore wind and other renewable energy projects sometimes impacts higher-income neighborhoods, their all too often "not in my backyard" opposition only serves to prolong our collective climate challenges.

However, the development of offshore wind holds the promise of helping to address this environmental injustice. The New York Offshore Wind Alliance submitted recommendations to BOEM that would facilitate direct investments in underserved communities and minority and women-owned businesses following the auction of new lease areas in the NY Bight.

But to maximize these investments and ensure that New York and New Jersey meet their climate and renewable energy goals, it's critical that BOEM maintain all the proposed lease areas and not reduce their size any further. The proposed leases are the minimum size necessary for New York and New Jersey to meet their ambitious clean energy and climate targets. Maintaining the eight

proposed lease areas will also broaden the pool of experienced offshore wind developers and promote greater competition to keep ratepayer costs down.

New York is already well on the way to meeting its offshore wind targets — and leading the way for other states to follow. New York has five offshore wind projects in development totaling 4,316 megawatts of generating capacity. That's enough power to provide one-third of the state's electricity demand.

But New York's progress will grind to a halt without the new leases being proposed by BOEM in the New York Bight. To its credit, BOEM has carefully shaped these areas to meet the concerns of a diverse group of stakeholders and it is proposing to finalize these leases later this year and hold an auction. BOEM should do so without delay, without reducing the number or size of the lease areas and in a manner that will ultimately direct investments to those communities that have paid the biggest price for our dependence on fossil fuels.

Joe Martens is director of the New York Offshore Wind Alliance and former commissioner of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

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About the New York Offshore Wind Alliance: The New York Offshore Wind Alliance (NYOWA) is a diverse coalition of organizations with a shared interest in promoting the responsible development of offshore wind power for New York. NYOWA is a new project of the Alliance for Clean Energy New York (ACE NY). www.aceny.org/NYOWA