

Climate Change II: Ecosystem Impacts of Offshore Alternative Energy Facilities in the Gulf of Maine

Introduction

The School of Law and Gulf of Maine Research Institute collaborated on a successful forum in April 2007 addressing climate change impacts on marine resources of the Northwest Atlantic. This meeting fulfilled the dual goals of (1) encouraging people from multiple disciplines (science, economics, policy and journalism) to stretch their thinking into new realms and learn from each other; and (2) giving GMRI and the School of Law an opportunity to collaborate for the first time. We would like to collaborate again on a follow-up meeting to be held in Spring 2008. This year's theme is alternative, renewable energy facilities, which in light of climate change are becoming more common on and off shore. This proposal relates to the siting of near- and off-shore facilities, as well as those on islands, that compete with other ocean and coastal uses.

Program summary

The United States, like many other nations, is hungry to meet the growing energy demands of its population while decreasing its dependence on fossil fuels. Renewable energy sites are developing rapidly and many of them are located in coastal waters or farther off-shore to take advantage of tidal and wind energy.

Under the federal Coastal Zone Management Act ("CZMA"), energy facility siting should be given priority consideration in coastal management planning. The Act recognizes, of course, that renewable energy facilities compete with other coastal-dependent uses, including navigation, fishing, aquaculture, tourism and recreation. State and local coastal managers must balance these competing interests in their coastal planning programs.

What are the logical opportunities for renewable energy facilities in the Gulf of Maine? What might be the impact of these facilities on GOM fisheries, on shore birds, on human inhabitants of the coasts and islands? Can we define locations that are ideal for such facilities as well as those that should be off-limits? How does the public participate in energy facility siting decisions and how are they best informed about these issues? How do we consider ecosystem-based management goals in developing coastal alternative energy policies?

Our second climate change summit (dubbed "CC2") will invite renewable energy entrepreneurs; fisheries scientists; economists; lawyers, legal academics and policymakers; and journalists to discuss these issues over two days at a conference to be held April 3-4, 2008, at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute.

Proposed Speakers

Keynote Addresses (energy entrepreneurs):

Matt Simmons, Ocean Energy Institute (invited)

Peter Mandelstam, Blue Water Wind (invited)

Angus King/Rob Gardiner, Independence Wind (invited)

Science

Stewart Fefer, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (confirmed)

TBD: Ocean fisheries and tidal/wind

TBD

Economics

Porter Hoagland, Marine Policy Center, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute (confirmed)

David Terkla, Department of Economics, University of Massachusetts, Boston (confirmed)

Charles Colgan, Muskie School, University Southern Maine (confirmed)

Law & Policy

Jeremy Firestone, College of Marine and Earth Studies, University of Delaware (confirmed)

David Owen, University of Maine School of Law (confirmed)

David Kaiser, NOAA Ocean & Coastal Resource Management Specialist (invited)

Public Communication & Participation/ Journalism

Jack Clark, Massachusetts Audubon Society (invited)

Christian McNeil, GrowSmart Maine, blogger (invited)

Journalist 2 (TBD)

Journalist 3 (TBD)

Participants

State public utilities, FERC and NMFS representatives

Fishing and lobster industry representatives

Energy and environmental law community

Economics, marine science and policy faculty from New England campuses

GMRI research scientists and managers; School of Law faculty and selected students

Science and environment journalists

Selected additional public participants

Planning Committee:

Rita Heimes, Center for Law & Innovation, U. Maine School of Law

Jeremy Firestone, Marine Policy professor, University of Delaware

Alan Lishness, Chief Innovation Officer, GMRI

Meredith Mendelson, Convening Group, GMRI

Lew Incze, Director, Aquatic Systems Group, USM

Dan Holland, Resource Economist, GMRI