

Murphy commits state to move on large offshore wind energy plan

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ATLANTIC CITY _ Governor Phil Murphy signed an executive order Wednesday to return the state to national leadership in offshore wind energy.

It would finally implement the Offshore Wind Economic Development Act of 2010, which languished under Gov. Chris Christie.

The law provided for ratepayer-financed offshore wind development through an Offshore Wind Renewable Energy Credit program. But Christie's administration never finalized regulations to implement it, and offshore wind developers have not gotten the approvals from the Board of Public Utilities to move forward, Murphy said.

The order commits the state to quickly generate 1,100 megawatts annually of offshore wind energy, and 3,500 megawatts of generation by the year 2030.

"Thirty-five hundred megawatts would make us the number one aspirational wind field in the world," said Murphy at a press conference at the Atlantic County Utilities Authority's wind farm and wastewater treatment plant, after a closed-door roundtable on wind energy. "More scale means a better shot to attract manufacturing here."

State Senate President Steve Sweeney, a co-sponsor of OWEDA, said the plan is not just to place windmills in the ocean, but to jump-start a wind energy manufacturing industry here.

The order "will make New Jersey the national leader for off-shore wind commitments, besting both New York and Massachusetts, which have goals of 2,400 and 1,600 megawatt goals respectively," said Doug O'Malley, director of Environment New Jersey.

Murphy's Executive Order directs the BPU to begin the rulemaking process, and BPU President Joseph Fiordaliso to work with New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Catherine McCabe to establish an Offshore Wind Strategic Plan for New Jersey.

The Plan will focus on job growth, workforce development, data collection, and appropriate determination of facilities. It will also make sure natural resources are protected.

The order instructs the BPU to implement a renewable energy credit program and issue a solicitation calling for proposed offshore wind projects for the generation of 1,100 megawatts of electric power, according to the governor's office. Finally, it instructs the BPU to engage with neighboring states on possible regional collaboration on offshore wind.

"This is great news for the people of New Jersey and a positive step forward in bringing offshore wind to the state," said Thomas Brostrøm, President, Orsted North America. The company holds a lease to develop Ocean Wind, a project with the potential to generate 1,000 megawatts of offshore wind about 10 miles off of Atlantic City.

That's enough to supply energy for 500,000 homes, Brostrom has said, and is on track to open between 2020 and 2025.

Brostrom said offshore wind will be a reliable part of New Jersey's energy mix and can be delivered at utility scale, "right into areas of high customer demand while also creating skilled jobs and an economic boom for the region."

A second major wind development off the Jersey Shore is planned for 183,353 acres leased by U.S. Wind Inc.

The order sends a clear message that New Jersey is serious about being the greenest state in the country, while creating good paying, clean energy jobs, said Ed Potosnak, Executive Director of the New Jersey League of Conservation Voters.

"It's hard to think of a more appropriate location than Atlantic City for this announcement - a city that is both on the frontlines of climate change and brimming with economic potential," said Potosnak.

New Jersey Audubon President and Chief Executive Officer Eric Stiles said his organization is happy that protection of wildlife is built into the plan.

"It sets very clear goals of 1,100 megawatts and directing the BPU and DEP to work jointly, recognizing the need to protect fish, birds and wildlife," said Stiles. "This is desperately needed. New Jersey has to live up to its responsibility for global warming, given how much of the coast is at stake for sea level rise."

On Monday, Murphy signed an executive order requiring the state Department of Environmental Protection and state Board of Public Utilities to take steps for New Jersey to rejoin the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI).

And on Thursday, state Senator Patrick Diegnan, D-Middlesex; Assemblyman Tim Eustace, D-Bergen/Passaic; and several environmental organizations will unveil two clean energy bills (A1823 and S1405) at a Trenton press conference. They will require New Jersey move to 100% clean energy by the year 2035.