

Federal offshore windpower agency tells Maine: Sign fast track charter, roll back LD 1810's fishermen protection. by Ron Huber Penobscot Baywatch

In March 2010 the Maine legislature passed and governor signed LD 1810 An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Governor's Ocean Energy Task Force. As amended, it was supported by many but not all in the Maine fishing community. It restricts offshore windfarm applications to **locations ten miles or farther offshore**, including off inhabited Maine islands. This keeps windmills off of most inshore fishing grounds.

But a federal agency has just come to Maine proposing to change this. The federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE, formerly MMS) has appointed a Maine "renewable ocean energy coordinator", Aditi Mirani. Her job is to convince the state to roll back the state's windfarm exclusion zone to **only three miles offshore**, the edge of state waters. Mirani previously did this with Maryland agencies and fishermen, in what was said to have been "stormy" meetings earlier this year.

On September 14th BOEMRE convened an interagency meeting in Belfast. About 40 federal and state officials attended including George Lapointe. Baldacci was given until September 24th to sign a "Maine Renewable Energy Task Force Charter" that gives the feds the right to ignore the legislature's ten mile limit, and would make the state accept windpower applications in those waters only three miles and further from the coast.

If the Governor signs, Maine gets two months to consult with the fishing industry and other ocean users and then supply the feds maps of waters three miles and further offshore, with outlines of windpower sacrifice zones for ocean windmill lease consideration. Up to 100 charted seamounts, ledges and other fishing grounds from three to ten miles off Maine could end up with windpower poles dug into the seafloor. Fishing would be severely restricted for liability reasons. Scalloping, shrimping and groundfishing especially.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Contact the following people. except for Baldacci, they were at the September 14th meeting. Tell them you want the Maine legislature to review the proposed federal/state charter before the state takes any action on it.

* Governor Baldacci (207) 287-3531 Governor@maine.gov

* Karin Tilberg, Governor's Sr. Policy Advisor 207/287-353 Karin.Tilberg@maine.gov

* Senator Chris Rector 354-6571 cwrector@hotmail.com

* Representative Bruce MacDonald (207) 633-0570 bmacdon@roadrunner.com

* Aditi Mirani Federal Maine offshore wind. (703)-787-1752 Aditi.Mirani@boemre.gov

* Your legislator, and Senator Snowe Collins, Chellie Pingree, etc.

Tell them the Maine legislature worked hard last session to protect fishermen from windpower encroachment on fishing grounds. It is wrong to let the federal government just walk in, throw out Maine state law and re-open a vast area to ocean windfarm leasing. Instead let the legislature and the fishermen take a hard look at the plan first.

Do it The grounds you save may be your own.