

Another big wind farm proposed to power RI

Alex Kuffner

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PROVIDENCE – The joint venture developing the first big offshore wind farm for Rhode Island is proposing to build a second, even larger project to supply power to the state.

The partnership between Danish offshore wind developer Ørsted and New England utility Eversource has submitted a proposal for what they're calling Revolution Wind 2, an 884-megawatt wind farm that would eclipse in size Revolution Wind, the 704-megawatt project they could soon start building in the vicinity of Rhode Island Sound.

The companies announced their proposal Monday, the deadline for submissions in response to a state-mandated procurement that opened last October for up to 1,000 megawatts of offshore wind power to supply homes and businesses in Rhode Island.

The request for proposals was issued by Rhode Island Energy, the state's dominant utility, which would buy the power from the successful bidder. While Rhode Island Energy did not provide details about the submissions on Monday, it said it would share information later in the week. It's unclear if other developers submitted proposals in response to the RFP.

Ørsted and Eversource are familiar names in the Ocean State. Ørsted is the owner of the Block Island Wind Farm, the five-turbine test project that in 2016 became the first offshore wind farm in the nation. Ørsted acquired the 30-megawatt project two years after construction when it bought Deepwater Wind, the Rhode Island company that developed the wind farm.

Together with Eversource, Ørsted is developing the Revolution Wind project, which secured a contract in 2019 for 400 megawatts of capacity with what was then National Grid. The remaining 304 megawatts will be sold to Connecticut.

A key federal approval for Revolution Wind is expected in July and construction, starting with onshore cable work, could follow immediately. The wind farm is scheduled to go into operation in 2025.

Under the contract, Rhode Island Energy would pay the developers 9.8 cents a kilowatt hour for power. The companies would not disclose the bid price for the new project, or even say how it compares to the Revolution Wind price.

Revolution Wind 2 would be built in the same general area of Atlantic Ocean waters as Revolution Wind, between Block Island and Martha's Vineyard. The number of turbines would depend on the model chosen, but all told, the project is expected to generate enough power for half a million homes.

The developers say the wind farm will represent more than \$2 billion in economic benefits to Rhode Island, including the creation of hundreds of jobs. They have committed to investing \$35 million in the port at the Quonset Business Park and building two new crew transfer boats in Rhode Island on top of the five already under construction for Revolution. Ørsted would also open an engineering hub in Rhode Island that would create 75 new engineering jobs. It already operates an assembly center with Eversource in the Port of Providence.

The groundwork for the procurement was laid last year with a bill submitted on behalf of Gov. Dan McKee's administration that was seen as key to the state's climate goals.

If the full amount is secured, offshore wind would meet nearly half of the state's electric demand in 2030, even accounting for the continuing electrification of the heating and transportation sectors.

With solar and other non-fossil fuel sources included, it would put the state's goal of getting all its electricity from renewable energy by 2033 within reach. It would also put Rhode Island well on the path to reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, as required by the 2021 Act on Climate.

After debate about rewarding Rhode Island Energy with an incentive for signing new contracts, the procurement went ahead without any remuneration for the utility.

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