

AN INTERAGENCY APPROACH TO RENEWABLE ENERGY PLANNING AND RESOURCE MAPPING: CURRENT INITIATIVES IN THE STATE OF MAINE

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Renewable energy planning has now taken center stage in our nation's efforts to both curb dependency on foreign oil and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that foment the potential for global warming and sea level rise. Through initiatives such as the Maine Bay Management Study, the Governor's Task Force on Wind Power Development and the subsequent Ocean Energy Task Force, the state of Maine has taken a proactive approach in preparation for alternative energy development (including wind and tidal power) in its coastal environs. In order to facilitate planning for renewable energy activities, a myriad of social, environmental, and political factors must be taken into account. To meet the state's potential goal of 300 MW of offshore wind by 2020¹, extensive coastal resource mapping and management structure planning must be undertaken to assist in the siting and development process.

At the basis of this ambitious planning process is the need for collaboration between state agencies regarding a host of topics which range from benthic habitat/coastal environment and living resources mapping to incentive improvement and streamlined policies regarding renewable energy development. Many state agencies have extensive mapping programs working on initiatives including fisheries resources, substrate composition, oil spill response, shellfish harvest areas, and coastal access. In order to combine these efforts, a collaborative, interagency group has been formed to identify areas of redundancy, overlap, or compliment, with the goal being to create a uniform, updateable, and comprehensive Coastal Profile Series with great potential for federal, state, and public use. This Series will also assist in highlighting areas where renewable energy siting could be either feasible or not and what types of, if any, changes need to be made to existing management structure.

In addition to these collaborative initiatives, consideration will also be given to the Wind Power Task Force recommendation² of streamlining current regulatory schemes and developing incentives to promote offshore wind development in the state of Maine. Given the dynamic and intricate nature of the coastal environment; special attention must be given to facilitate planning, siting, and management.

These processes, vital to successful implementation of recommendations from both the Bay Management Study and the Wind Power and Ocean Energy Task Forces, will

¹ Report of the Governor's Task Force on Wind Power Development, page 13.

² Report of the Governor's Task Force on Wind Power Development, page 41, second recommendation.

ultimately lead to stronger state, regional, municipal, and ecosystem-based management frameworks in the state of Maine.

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