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GOVERNOR

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04333-0001

7. HABITAT (Jan. 26 – 28, 2021)

#3

January 22, 2021

To Maine fishermen and fishing organizations,

I wanted you to hear from me directly regarding my administration's proposal for a floating offshore wind research array in the Gulf of Maine. I am keenly aware that offshore wind (OSW) is a concern for some of you. However, I feel strongly that Maine must be committed to the development of clean energy, to the fight against climate change, and to the pursuit of innovation to create economic opportunity for our people.

We are all seeing the results of climate change firsthand – warming temperatures, violent weather events, rising and warming ocean waters. Make no mistake about it, OSW is coming to the Gulf of Maine, even without my support. It would be irresponsible for me to ignore both the potential benefit of offshore wind as part of Maine's clean energy portfolio, and the possible impacts it may have on Maine's natural resources and heritage industries such as fishing which are a vital part of our economy and our cultural identity.

The economic and job creation opportunities were reaffirmed in 2019 with the passage of the Maine Aqua Ventus legislation and recent state economic reports. States across the country are racing to lead in OSW technology, job creation, and port development. This industry is also growing rapidly in other parts of the world, leading to new opportunities in sectors from boat building to construction to engineers. Maine is approaching OSW development in a way that maximizes good paying jobs for Maine people and economic benefits for our state while seeking to minimize impacts through a phased approach.

I ask that you remain at the table for what I know are hard conversations. We need to work with the fishing industry on a number of aspects of this new technology. I believe that starting small and taking a stepwise approach through this proposed research array is a valuable opportunity to understand potential impacts and ensure we can inform federal decision-making in the future.

While we may not agree on the best response to offshore wind development in the Gulf of Maine, please know that I am being fully briefed on the feedback you are providing to the Energy Office and DMR, and I understand your concerns. I want to make it clear that my focus is the research array, proposed for federal waters. New, commercial-scale offshore wind projects do not belong in state waters that support the majority of the State's lobster fishing activity, that provide important habitat for coastal marine and wildlife species and that support a tourist industry based in part on Maine's iconic coastal views. To ensure state waters are appropriately considered in any future energy development, I will submit legislation to create a 10-year moratorium on any new



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state waters wind energy development. I will also direct state agencies to review their authority related to use of state waters for leasing and permitting of energy projects.

With regard to the research array, I cannot push the timeline for the submission to BOEM off as far as some would like. Development will not be halted completely because of Covid-19, nor should we delay action indefinitely. I have extended the timeline of the pre-application phase for a few months to allow for additional substantive input from the fishing industry. The State will form a working group of impacted fishing industry members to inform the siting process and research plan, with the goal of reducing potential impacts. If Covid-19 numbers decline, we will also hold in-person meetings in small groups this spring to obtain additional input.

We have the opportunity to work proactively to learn how best offshore wind can coexist with fishing and other existing uses. If Maine doesn't take the lead, I believe we – the state, and the fishing industry in particular – will be at a great disadvantage in the future. I remain steadfast in my commitment to work with the fishing industry to find creative, innovative solutions to help our communities and economies thrive.

Sincerely,



Janet T. Mills  
Governor



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