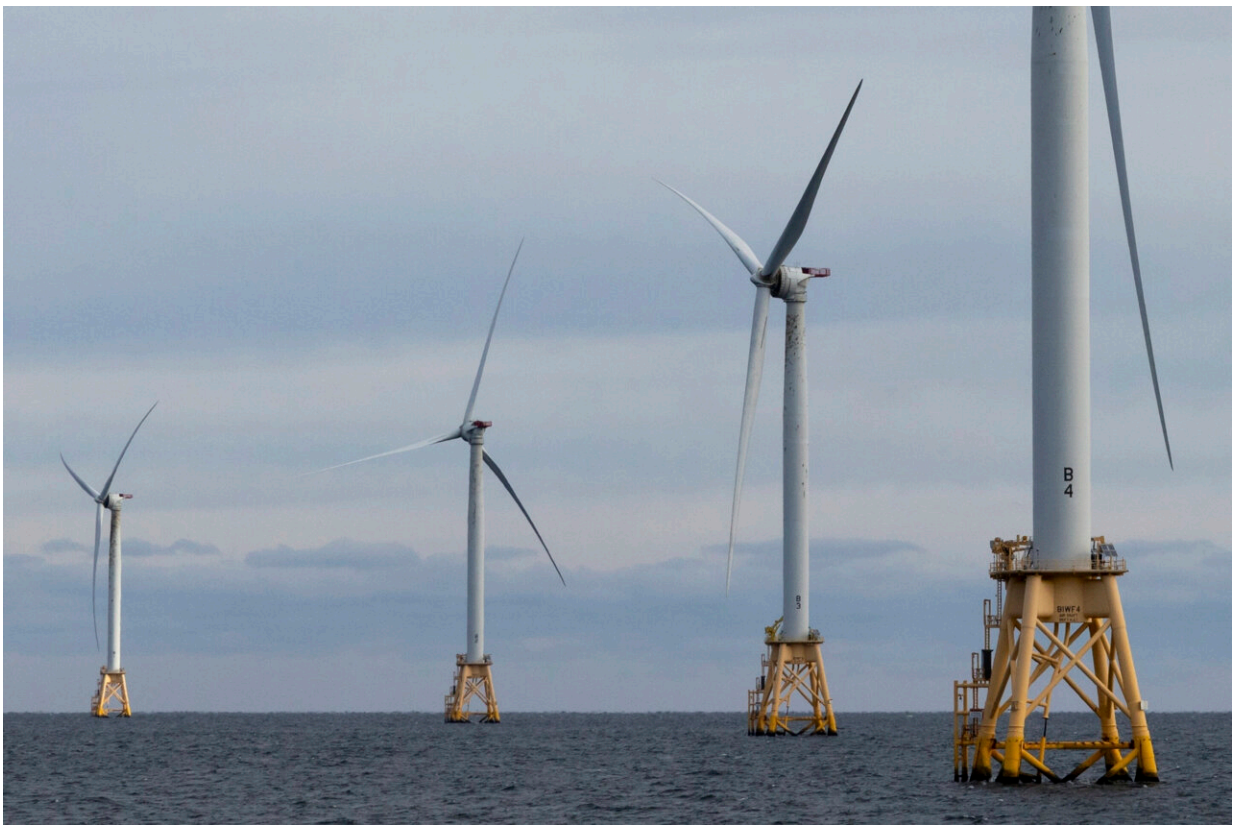
Blade collapse, New York launch and New Jersey research show uneven progress of offshore wind

July 18 2024, by Wayne Parry



Turbines operate at the Block Island Wind Farm, Dec. 7, 2023, off the coast of Block Island, R.I. The Massachusetts Senate debated a bill Tuesday, June 25, 2024 aimed at expanding the adoption of renewable energy in a bid to to help Massachusetts get one step closer to meeting its aggressive climate goals, including reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Credit: AP Photo/Julia Nikhinson, File

Three events Wednesday highlighted the uneven progress of the offshore wind industry in the Northeast, including the start of a major project in New York, research aimed at preventing environmental damage in New Jersey, and a temporary shutdown of a wind farm in Massachusetts after a broken turbine blade washed ashore on a famous beach.

The federal government ordered a wind farm operator off the coast of Nantucket in Massachusetts to suspend operations while cleanup continues after a wind turbine blade fell into the water, broke apart, and washed up on beaches at the popular vacation spot.

Vineyard Wind said Wednesday that it has removed 17 cubic yards of debris, enough to fill more than six truckloads, along with several larger pieces that washed ashore. The debris was mostly non-toxic fiberglass fragments ranging in size from small pieces to larger sections, typically green or white.

Vineyard Wind, a joint venture between Avangrid and Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners, bolstered its beach patrols to 35 people looking for and removing debris.

"We're making progress in the debris recovery efforts and mobilizing even more resources on the island to hasten the cleanup as quickly as possible," the company's CEO Klaus Moeller said in a statement. "The public can have confidence that we will be here as long as it takes to get the job done."

Also on Wednesday, a groundbreaking ceremony was held to start construction of New York's largest offshore wind project, Sunrise Wind, a 924-megawatt project by the Danish wind developer Orsted. Once completed, the project will provide enough clean energy to power

approximately 600,000 New York homes.

Land-based wind turbines turn in Atlantic City, N.J. on July 20, 2023. On Monday, July 1, 2024, the U.S,. Interior Department approved the Atlantic Shores offshore wind project in New Jersey, which would be the state's first wind farm once additional federal and state approvals are granted. Credit: AP Photo/Wayne Parry, File

It will be located approximately 30 miles (50 kilometers) east of Montauk, New York.

"We look forward to building New York's largest offshore wind project, helping the state meet its clean energy targets while strengthening the

local offshore wind workforce and supply chain," said David Hardy, executive vice president and CEO Americas for Orsted.

Orsted was far along in the approval process to build two offshore wind farms in New Jersey when it scrapped both projects last October, saying they were no longer financially feasible.

And New Jersey officials on Wednesday said they would make nearly $5 million available for scientific research projects to document current environmental conditions in areas where wind farms are planned, as well as to predict and prevent potential harm to the environment or wildlife.

Giant wind turbine blades for the Vineyard Winds project are stacked on racks in the harbor, July 11, 2023, in New Bedford, Mass. Vineyard Wind said Tuesday, July 16, 2024, that it is working to recover debris on Nantucket's

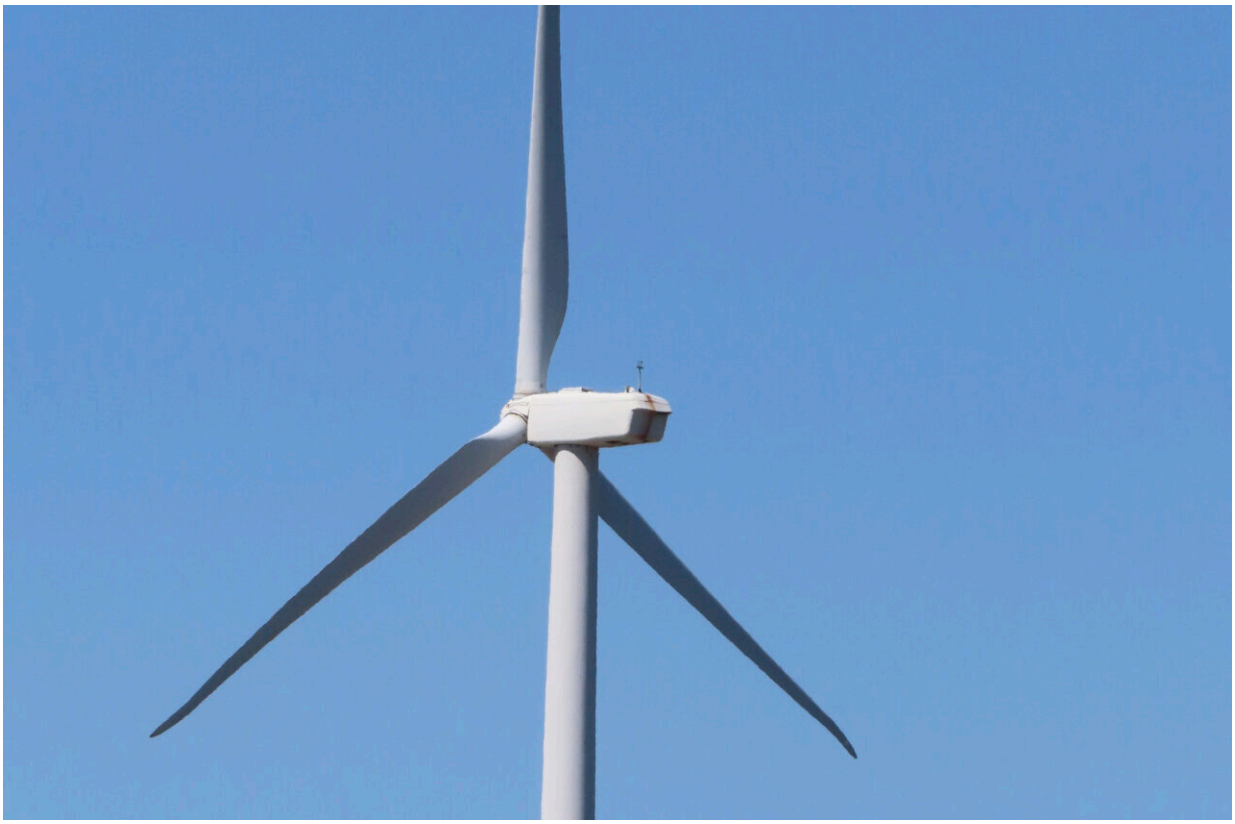
southern-facing beaches after one of the wind turbine blades suffered damage last weekend. Credit: AP Photo/Charles Krupa, File

Shawn LaTourette, New Jersey's environmental protection commissioner, said his state "is committed to advancing science that will ensure that offshore wind, a necessary component of our work to address the impact of climate change, is developed responsibly and in a manner that minimizes impacts to our precious coastal environment."

The state is seeking proposals for surveying wildlife and habitats before wind farm construction starts; making technical innovations in data collection and analysis; studying fishery sustainability and socio-economic impacts of offshore wind; identifying and reducing the impact of offshore wind noise on marine life, and studies of bird and bat abundance, among other things.

Concerns about potential damage to the environment, marine life and birds have been among the reasons cited by opponents of offshore wind for trying to halt the nascent industry in the U.S. On Wednesday, one of the most vocal groups, Protect Our Coast-NJ used the Nantucket accident to renew its call to end the offshore wind industry, calling the incident "simply unacceptable."

Land-based wind turbines spin in Atlantic City, N.J., on April 28, 2022. On July 11, 2024, Community Offshore Wind identified itself as the third company to submit plans for an offshore wind farm in New Jersey by the previous day's deadline. Credit: AP Photo/Wayne Parry



A land-based wind turbine spins in Atlantic City, N.J. on April 28, 2022. On July 11, 2024, Community Offshore Wind identified itself as the third company to submit plans for an offshore wind farm in New Jersey by the previous day's deadline. Credit: AP Photo/Wayne Parry

Jason Ryan, a spokesman for the American Clean Power Association, said the wind industry is committed to safe and reliable operations, adding it follows "rigorous and regulated standards and strict environmental protocols."

Referring to the Nantucket incident, he said, "Wind power is one of the safest forms of energy generation, and millions of people around the world live and work near wind farms without issue. This type of incident is extremely rare and there were no injuries. We are working closely

with our member companies and are confident the situation will be resolved expeditiously."