



3. **MARKETS: N.J. launches process for financing offshore wind farms** (05/17/2011)

Christa Marshall, E&E reporter

New Jersey is opening up the application process for a new financing structure for offshore wind projects.

Yesterday, New Jersey's Republican governor, Chris Christie, announced that the state Board of Public Utilities would accept applications for offshore wind farms through June 14. It is the first step in the state's quest to become an early mover in the offshore wind space, which is still searching for its first constructed project in the United States.

The application process was set up by the Offshore Wind Economic Development Act, signed by Christie last year. The bill called for a new financing system for offshore wind using "offshore wind renewable energy certificates," or ORECs.

It mirrors a state program providing solar credits that helped shoot New Jersey to second place in 2009 in terms of U.S. photovoltaic panel installations ([ClimateWire](#), Aug. 20, 2010). Under the program, electricity suppliers will be required to hold ORECS, along with other renewable credits, to meet the state's renewable mandate.

Christie plans to meet with climate scientists

If offshore wind developers provide a complete application by the June 14 deadline, the board will have 180 days to make a decision on whether a given developer can receive credits. Any viable project also will have to go through a multi-year process of state and federal permitting.

The state currently has several proposed projects at various stages of the permitting process, including a six-turbine wind farm off the coast of Atlantic City that received state permits last month.

"The wind power movement is providing us with a unique opportunity to advance energy as industry. By doing so, we have the ability to leverage our tremendous resources with ground-breaking technologies," Christie said yesterday in a statement.

The governor is expected to release his master energy plan for the state in coming weeks, according to Christie spokesman Kevin Roberts. Roberts also confirmed that Christie said over the weekend, as first reported by NJSpotlight.com, that comments in November 2010 about climate skepticism were made because he didn't have enough information at the time to make "an informed opinion."

Christie will be meeting with climate scientists this week, Roberts confirmed, although he would not disclose the details of the private meeting.

Report suggests that more states harness offshore wind

Last year, Christie said, "I think we're going to need more science to prove something one way or the other," when asked about global warming ([ClimateWire](#), Nov. 11, 2010).

The offshore-wind announcement comes as New Jersey, along with other states, grapples with how to fund energy programs at a time of high budget deficits. In that regard, a group supportive of renewable energy released a [study](#) yesterday analyzing how states can best use available dollars.

One of the lessons from the report from the Clean Energy States Alliance is that rebate programs, like one offered in New Jersey, have limitations over the long term because of the uncertainty of their funding in the state appropriation process, according to Mark Sinclair, executive director of the alliance.

States should look more at "innovating financing," such as loan programs, he said. Northeastern states also should consider shifting some of their government funds from land-based wind, which has run into challenges in dense areas along the East Coast, to offshore projects, he said.

"Each state needs to figure out its strength and focus on that," he said.

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