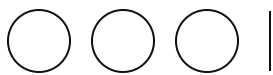


## BUSINESS

# New London State Pier could be threatened by new wind power projects in Providence and Salem, Mass.

**Luther Turmelle**

Jan. 22, 2024

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A view of the staging area at the State Pier where a massive wind farm project is coming together.

Alex Soule / Hearst CT Media

Energy experts have differing opinions on whether efforts to establish a new off-shore wind farm staging areas in Rhode Island's port of Providence and in Salem, Mass. just north of Boston could impact the number of projects served by Connecticut's New London State Pier.

The two out-of state projects are potential threats to the amount of staging area activity at the State Pier in New London, according to Robert McCullough, managing partner of Oregon-based McCullough Research. The project in Salem, Mass. involves the impending acquisition of a 37-acre waterfront property in that city by a Massachusetts quasi-public agency, while the plans in Rhode Island are for a \$70 million shipping and staging area for offshore wind turbines near the mouth of the Providence River in that city's port area.

"A lot of the attraction assumes that the wind projects will add employment locally," McCullough said. "As with all massive projects, this is a case of devil in the details. The effect is likely to be smaller than expected."

The primary economic benefit to the project will come from local laborers assembling the wind-turbine components in the port area, he said.

"The big dollar items are unlikely to benefit the local economy," McCullough said. "Offshore wind is tremendously challenging and the expertise and technology is primarily in Europe."

Eric Smith, the associate director of Tulane University's Energy Institute and a professor of energy issues, said not every port is capable of hosting wind power staging facilities.

"These facilities need acreage, an adequate workforce and deep water," Smith said. "And people always want the shortest distant between the shore base for the work and the ultimate destination of where these turbine are going to be erected."

But even with that specific set of requirements, he said wind power staging areas that are in relatively close proximity to each other run the risk of stealing work from each other.

"There is a finite amount of this work being done and it's a function of how many of these turbines will be assembled," Smith said.

McCullough said components for the turbines are shipped from Europe. And right now, the specialized ships used to install the wind farms come from overseas as well: The Charybdis, the first U.S.-made turbine-installation vessel, is currently under construction in Brownsville, Texas.

Growing pains in the United States' comparatively new off-shore wind industry have already claimed a project whose staging area was to have been in Bridgeport. Orange-based [Avangrid pulled out of the Park City Wind project in October 2023](#).

Craig Gilvarg, an Avangrid spokesman, declined comment on whether competition from other wind power staging areas being in New England had any impact on the company's decision to pull out of the Park City Wind project. But Ken Kimmell, the company's vice resident of development for offshore wind, [told the Boston Globe in late December that when Avangrid puts out new bids for wind power projects across the region](#), it intends to use the Salem staging area.

Avangrid is expected to be among the bidders submitting new wind power proposals to officials in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, which are due to be submitted the end of January. [Officials from the three states agreed in early October to launch a joint effort to procure new wind power contracts](#).

While Smith and McCullough contend that plans for wind power staging facilities in Salem, Mass. and Providence could pose a threat to New London's standing as a wind power staging area, it's not an opinion shared by New London Mayor Michael Passero.

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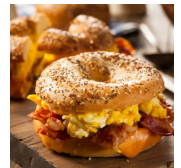
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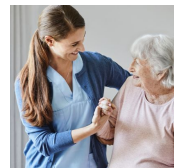
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"To achieve the scale of off-shore wind development planned for the next 10-to-20 years, use of all the ports capable of handling the assembly will be required," Passero said, "Port New London has great natural assets, including a strategic location that make it an especially attractive port for deploying wind turbine assemblies."

Ulysses Hammond, interim executive director for the Connecticut Port Authority, said the staging area at the State Pier can coexist without having its work poached by other ports.

"If we are to even come close to achieving any of our climate change goals within the next 10 to 20 years, it will require a robust set of wind marshalling terminals," Hammond said. "We are about collaboration, not competition. This is about bringing a new industry to America."

The port of New London is in a unique position, he said, in that it is the first operational U.S.-based heavy-lift marine terminal that will accommodate offshore wind towers, nacelles and blades. The pier can support cargo of up to 5,000 pounds per square foot on its two separate heavy lift platforms.

Justin May, an external spokesman for Eversource Energy's wind power business, said the State Pier is currently being used for staging and turbine assembly for the South Fork Wind project, now underway.

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"Once South Fork Wind is completed, turbine staging and assembly activity for Revolution Wind — Connecticut's first offshore wind farm — will commence at the site," May said. "As we've stated publicly, New London State Pier is a tremendous

resource for offshore wind developers due to its unobstructed access to the sea, proximity to offshore wind lease areas, and heavy-lift capabilities."

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