

Trudy Coxe, CEO
Preservation Society of Newport County

Re: Lawsuit against Revolution Wind permit

Ms. Coxe,

We the undersigned members of the Rhode Island environmental, scientific and labor communities ask you to immediately withdraw your lawsuit against the Revolution Wind 1 project, before you further imperil future generations. We do so because the visual effects of tourists and Newport residents having to see offshore wind farms a dozen miles off the coast are simply not comparable to the impacts of the climate crisis and continued fossil fuel use. This project will bring over 700 MW of electricity to the New England grid, including 400 MW to Rhode Island, playing a pivotal role in helping the state meet its emission reduction mandate of 45% below 1990 levels by 2030 and net-zero by 2050. The project's jobs and many other benefits would be sabotaged by the lawsuit you have filed, as would the future that our children inherit. To do so in the name of historical preservation is dishonorable. Your action reflects the energy privilege available to only some members of our society.

The Climate Crisis is the most severe threat faced by not only Rhode Island but all of humanity in the early 21st century. And it is already here: North America continues to see more extreme weather, including droughts, floods, and multiple seasons marked by catastrophic wildfires. In July the Earth experienced the hottest weather we've seen in 125,000 years, while at the same time we experienced dangerous air quality here in New England caused by smoke from Canada's worst wildfire season on record. And we are seeing increased immigration from regions such as Central America where climate-induced droughts are devastating corn crops and the communities who depend on them for subsistence agriculture.

In Rhode Island, beyond heat and air quality concerns, we are seeing extreme levels of rainfall and local flooding, the warming of Narragansett Bay and the arrival of tropical species in our waters. In the future we can expect an accelerating rise of sea levels, eroding coastlines, and the increased spread of diseases and pests which will affect both our forests and local crops. All of this will get worse; the degree to which it gets worse depends largely on our ability to rapidly reduce our emissions of greenhouse gasses. Rhode Island may be small, but we cannot wait for others to reduce emissions sharply if we don't. We are in the richest part of the richest nation on Earth, most responsible for warming and greenhouse gasses currently in the atmosphere.

As the former Massachusetts Secretary of Environmental Affairs, surely you must understand the urgency of the climate crisis. But you may or may not understand just how central offshore wind is to our state's strategy to rapidly reduce emissions. The hundreds of studies that have looked at plans to decarbonize economies consistently rest on two main strategies: eliminating emissions in our electricity supply and electrifying transportation and heating. As electrification could cause power demand to double in a few decades, this further underscores the need to construct massive volumes of electricity generation that do not emit carbon, as quickly as humanly possible. Offshore wind is a critical resource for decarbonizing Rhode Island and New England writ large, as seen in [major modeling efforts](#) by independent teams of scientists. Any delay in decarbonization will increase the warming of the climate.

New England is one of the leading regions for solar deployment in the United States, but this is accompanied by a high level of seasonal variation. We desperately need non-emitting sources

that will generate high levels of power in the fall and winter, and will need this even more as we transition heating from gas and oil to electric solutions. There is no other non-emitting resource that provides the combination of high levels of fall and winter power generation, affordability, technology maturity, and ability to be deployed rapidly that offshore wind does. As such, offshore wind farms such as the one that you are suing to stop are critical to the ability of our region to decarbonize. Without offshore wind, the New England region will simply be unable to reduce greenhouse gas emissions enough to stave off the worst havoc that global warming can wreak on us.

Additionally, the Revolution Wind project has already resulted in \$40 million in investment in port facilities in Rhode Island. It will create more than 1,000 construction jobs in Connecticut and Rhode Island. Unlike most of the jobs in the tourist industry that you promote, these are high-paying, union jobs. And they will not stop when the wind turbines are erected and connected to the grid. This wind farm will create high-paying, union jobs in operations and maintenance, as well as providing revenue for the owners of local vessels.

Finally, we do not consider the mere sight of wind turbines to be damaging to the aesthetic or cultural value of Rhode Island or its tourism industry. These will appear as mere toothpicks on the horizon, often will not be visible, and many tourists and residents will find them interesting, inspiring and beautiful. But that is largely irrelevant, as any negative effects that you claim will be caused by the view of wind turbines from Aquidneck Island are exceedingly trivial compared to the economic benefits and urgent environmental need for this project. To value the alleged impacts to “viewsheds” of mansions over the civilization-level threat faced by our region and world from the climate crisis shows an extreme level of what has been described as “energy privilege.”

A recent peer reviewed article in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* describes how anti-wind opposition is disproportionately found in wealthier, whiter areas of the United States and Canada. “Opposition to clean energy is a privilege. It imposes pollution burdens on poorer communities and communities of color, as it slows down the transition away from fossil fuel electricity sources overwhelmingly placed in their backyards. The impacts of this delay can be felt for generations.” Studies have shown that children exposed to higher levels of air pollution experienced major health impacts and potentially devastating socio-economic ramifications. This justice issue is worsened by the fact that the richest 1% emit as much greenhouse gasses as 66% of the rest of humanity. We ask you to consider what you’re asking other communities to bear in order to maintain your privileged aesthetic view.

This sabotage of the future that our children will inherit in the name of speculative concern about historical preservation is dishonorable. As such, we the undersigned representing the environmental, scientific, and labor communities in the state of Rhode Island call upon you to immediately withdraw this lawsuit, before you cause further damage to both Rhode Island’s efforts to combat climate change, your own legacy, and to the reputation of the Preservation Society of Newport County.

Signed: (*for identification only)

J. Timmons Roberts, Professor and Director, Climate and Development Lab, Brown University*
George Nee, President, Rhode Island AFL-CIO
Patrick Crowley, Secretary-Treasurer, Rhode Island AFL-CIO
Amanda Barker, Policy Advocate, Green Energy Consumers Alliance

Robert Kenney, Emeritus Marine Research Scientist, University of Rhode Island,
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Jeff Migneault and Caitlin Sanford, Co-Presidents, Climate Action Rhode Island
Christian Roselund and Daria Phoebe Brashear, Providence Urbanist Network
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