

March 19, 2026

Rhode Island House Committee on Corporations
Submitted via email: HouseCorporations@rilegislature.gov

RE: House Bill 7727, Relating to Public Utilities and Carriers - Offshore Wind Procurement Policy Study Commission

The National Wildlife Federation has long advocated for the responsible development of offshore wind energy. We strongly support HB 7727, *Relating to Public Utilities and Carriers - Offshore Wind Procurement Policy Study Commission*. This bill would establish a fifteen member Commission to develop an Offshore Wind Procurement Policy Study to develop a clear strategy for Rhode Island to procure 1,200 megawatts (MW) of offshore wind by 2030. HB 7727 represents a critical step forward in securing a clean, affordable, and sustainable energy future for Rhode Island.

Rhode Island is a leader in offshore wind as the first state in the nation to build a project of this kind; the Block Island Wind Farm has proven time and again to be an invaluable resource not just to provide power to the state, but also providing research opportunities and a case study for offshore wind energy in the United States. The Revolution Wind project, which delivered first power to both Rhode Island and Connecticut just last week, is one of the nation's first utility-scale projects and is a symbol of hope for the entire industry.

Now is the time for Rhode Island to strengthen its renewable energy development priorities to stay on track to meet its clean energy goals. The *Road to 100% Electricity Report (2021)* indicates that Rhode Island will need up to 1,100 MW of offshore wind to achieve its 100% Renewable Energy Standard, yet only 430 MW has been procured to date. The creation of a commission to study procurement policy, with a target of 1,200 MW will help establish a clear and responsible pathway to achieving these goals.

We emphasize that offshore wind must be built responsibly, with careful attention to wildlife and marine ecosystems, ensuring that both Rhode Island's climate and biodiversity goals advance. Responsible development of offshore wind energy requires early planning and proactive leadership by the state to signal to the federal government and the industry its commitment and intent to advance renewable energy, specifically offshore wind. Even during periods when offshore wind development may appear slowed, states retain the ability to articulate their priorities, coordinate resources, and take state-level actions that facilitate a smooth and environmentally responsible energy transition, ensuring readiness for the critical progress ahead.

We appreciate that the commission will include representation from environmental organizations, and we have seen the strength and benefit of environmental leadership on these procurement-focused advisory groups in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and other states. We further strongly encourage the inclusion of explicit considerations of environmental and wildlife impacts within the commission's mandate.

By incorporating representatives, particularly from environmental organizations, this commission can help guide procurement towards environmentally robust decisions, which encourage both the state and developers to incorporate critical protections and incentives at the earliest stages of the process.

Other states have used strategic procurement to align investments with environmental standards and resource-protection objectives, including through required developer participation in research collaboratives and the provision of research funding. Such approaches help ensure that development is planned and carried out in a manner that safeguards sensitive onshore and nearshore ecosystems, and supports the ongoing science needs of the state related to offshore wind development and wildlife impacts.

The mandate of the commission, to explore a 1,200 MW offshore wind strategy, is necessary to achieve a clean energy transition, address community needs, and protect wildlife and habitats. By expanding offshore wind capacity, the state can lower electricity costs, reduce reliance on fossil fuels, and improve grid reliability, particularly during the winter when demand is highest. We support the focus on multi-state or regional procurement coordination (§39-36-4(3)). Coordination across ISO-NE states is key to a holistic approach, which can create efficiencies and reduce redundant development that can impact shared regional species and ecosystems. Regional data sharing and joint environmental planning can minimize ecological impacts while promoting efficient and responsible offshore wind deployment.

By committing to the establishment of this offshore wind commission now, Rhode Island signals its unwavering dedication to protecting the environment while transitioning to a clean and sustainable energy future. Passing this bill is necessary for Rhode Island to stay on track in meeting its climate goals and ensure the protection of wildlife and natural ecosystems.

Sincerely,

Shayna Steingard
Senior Wildlife Policy Specialist
National Wildlife Federation