

# ENSURING RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT OF OFFSHORE WIND

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With a pathway to produce 5200 megawatts of offshore wind (OSW) by 2035 and Dominion Energy on track to deliver half of that power by 2026,<sup>1</sup> Virginia is well on its way to confronting the climate crisis and realizing the creation of thousands of jobs supporting its industry. Virginia must now ensure that OSW is done right, meaning it is brought online in a way that is fair, equitable, and beneficial for all Virginians. In particular, this means ensuring that the OSW job opportunities and training/educational programs are available, affordable, community-based, and widely promoted throughout the Commonwealth. It also means that OSW is responsibly sited both offshore and onshore with its transmission lines.

## CHALLENGE

In 2020, the Virginia Clean Economy Act (VCEA) was enacted, which envisions development of 5200 megawatts of offshore wind by 2035. This sizable commitment to offshore wind helps position the Commonwealth to become an offshore wind hub for the industry – an industry with the potential to create jobs for thousands of Virginians, to build wealth, and lift communities from poverty.

To attract these employers here and capture the job-creating and cost-saving benefits of offshore wind development, Virginia must ensure it stands up a ready workforce for offshore wind. To do otherwise risks losing large manufacturers, like Siemens-Gamesa, from locating in Virginia. Virginia must quickly train and deploy a large and diverse workforce to support the construction of wind turbines along with the manufacturing of its parts.

The VCEA provides general guidance governing Dominion's OSW workforce development plans

as presented to the State Corporation Commission, especially as it applies to employing local workers and individuals from historically disadvantaged communities. Policies must be enacted that require Dominion to meet specific and measurable hiring goals so as to ensure that this ratepayer-funded project equitably delivers on the intent behind the VCEA. Policy must also clarify that Dominion's hiring plans not be interpreted as limited to the 150 jobs that Dominion has stated it will create directly with the construction of its Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind (CVOW) project, but be instead reflective of Dominion's larger role in supporting the majority of the offshore wind jobs generated by suppliers, manufacturers, subcontractors, etc.

Dominion is required to work with a number of state agencies including the Department of Energy (DOE), which is also tasked per Executive Order 43 to develop a clean energy workforce development plan. These plans must be the result of a robust public outreach and engagement process, especially within low-income communities and communities of color. Also, the necessary training and educational programs outlined in the plan must be fully funded, including the funds necessary to promote these programs across the state, especially in said communities.

Virginia must also ensure responsible development of offshore wind, which includes protection for marine mammals and other wildlife, especially the endangered North Atlantic Right Whale. Onshore transmission lines must be responsibly sited, i.e., minimizing and mitigating the impacts of routing lines through environmentally sensitive areas and environmental justice communities especially.

## SOLUTION

Offshore wind can provide clean energy at the scale necessary to confront the climate crisis head-on. If implemented responsibly, this renewable energy source can create thousands of family-supporting jobs for Virginians and be delivered in a way that is fair, equitable, and beneficial for all.

These are family-supporting, career-length jobs that can employ a broad swath of Virginians, including people with and without high school diplomas, workers impacted by COVID, military personnel transitioning to the civilian workforce, and returning citizens.

In addition to tremendous job opportunities, offshore wind turbines made and constructed with

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Enact policy that reflects the VCEA's intent for diverse and equitable hiring, with specific and measurable goals. This would include requirements that Dominion submit diversity, equity, and inclusion plans, including a workforce diversity plan addressing all CVOW-related hires across construction and the supply chain as well as a supplier diversity program plan.

Direct funds to be administered by departments under the direction of the Secretary of Commerce, to support clean energy workforce development programs that are accessible, affordable and community-based, and provide the funds necessary to promote those training opportunities to the specific communities outlined in the VCEA (i.e., historically disadvantaged communities, veterans, local workers).

State natural resource agencies should use environmental review processes to require avoidance and minimization of impacts to offshore, nearshore, and onshore habitats, and compensation for the impacts that cannot be avoided.

American parts and labor also bring significant cost savings. Globally, costs have plunged 32% in the past year, and industry experts anticipate even further price drops as the U.S. builds its own manufacturing and supply chain instead of importing European parts. State regulators and Dominion must ensure that project approvals ensure competitive, least cost prices for offshore wind.

State and federal agencies must ensure responsible development of offshore wind infrastructure using least-conflict siting and best available science to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts to ocean and on-shore wildlife and habitat, cultural resources, and communities, and must pursue stakeholder-informed decision making.

Wind turbine off of Virginia's coast.

Image credit: Hunter Norfingier, Sierra Club Virginia Chapter