



Stalled Pipeline Overshadows Dominion's OSW Project

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By Christen Smith

Dominion Energy proposed the largest offshore wind [project](#) in the U.S. last week on the heels of Virginia's policy turn toward clean energy, but environmental groups see the announcement as a hollow gesture given the ongoing development of the company's Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

"It's really a stretch to believe anyone at Dominion is concerned about a transition to clean energy as long as it's pursuing close to an \$8 billion fossil fuel project that would lock Virginians into fossil fuels for many decades to come," Tom Cormons, executive director of Appalachian Voices, told *RTO Insider*. "The company now has two very expensive proposals on the table, and one of those is completely antithetical to any state commitment to clean energy."

Dominion said Thursday it filed an application with [PJM](#) to interconnect more than 2,600 MW of offshore wind turbines through 2026. The project will be an extension of a pilot [program](#) intended to lower the cost of offshore wind development and will be located in 112,800 acres of federal waters some 27 miles off the coast of Virginia Beach.



Dominion announced the largest offshore wind project in the country last week. | *Dominion Energy*

“Offshore wind is an excellent renewable energy source, and this filing with PJM shows how serious we are about bringing commercial-scale offshore wind to Virginia, giving our customers what they have asked for — more renewable energy,” Mark D. Mitchell, Dominion’s vice president of generation construction, said in a statement. “Gov. Ralph Northam has made it clear Virginia is committed to leading the way in offshore wind. We are rising to this challenge with this 2,600-MW commercial offshore wind development.”

Mitchell’s comments reference Northam’s [executive order](#), signed Sept. 17, that mandates statewide energy production become 30% renewable over the next decade and 100% by 2050. His plan includes installing 3,000 MW of solar and onshore wind by 2022 and up to 2,500 MW of offshore wind by 2026.

“This executive order will help ensure that Virginia remains at the forefront of clean energy innovation, meets the urgency of the challenges brought on by climate change, and captures the economic, environmental and health benefits of this energy growth in an equitable way that benefits all Virginians,” Northam said. His office did not respond to a request for comment on Monday.



Map of the planned project | Dominion Energy

“Natural gas is a great partner for renewables,” said Jeremy Slayton, a Dominion spokesperson. “It helps fill in the gaps due to the intermittent nature of wind and solar generation.”

“Dominion wants to build anything and everything that the government will approve and that they can ... charge Virginians millions of dollars for,” Cormons said. “In my view, there’s no way we can have a conversation about an offshore wind project until Dominion renounces its efforts to build the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.”

Although many state environmental groups have echoed Cormons’ sentiment — including the [Chesapeake Climate Action Network](#) and the [Sierra Club](#) — the American Wind Energy Association applauded both announcements in a statement released Friday.

“We applaud Gov. Northam’s ambitious goal of 2,500 MW of offshore wind by 2026 and Dominion Energy’s announcement of a large-scale project that’s up to the challenge,” said Laura Smith Morton, AWEA’s senior director of offshore wind development.

“Offshore wind will strengthen Virginia’s economy with many highly skilled careers and new investments in the shipbuilding, port and coastal infrastructure needed to deploy and maintain this new American energy source.”