

\$39M to study wind energy

BY MARK HARRINGTON

mark.harrington@newsday.com

Long Island will be home to a "major stake in the ground" for the nascent U.S. offshore wind-energy industry with the awarding of \$39 million in federal and state grants to fund a new research and development consortium here, a top state official said Thursday.

The multistate consortium will be based at Stony Brook University's Advanced Energy Research and Technology Center, whose chairman, Robert Catell, will also serve as chairman of the new National Offshore Wind Research and Development Consortium. Catell was formerly chairman of National Grid USA and chief executive of KeySpan, both of which ran the Long Island electric grid for LIPA before PSEG Long Island.

"As offshore wind technology advances so rapidly around the world, this will keep the United

States competitive at a critical time, taking advantage of expertise and wind potential" in the northeast, Catell said in a statement.

At a forum on offshore wind at the Long Island Association headquarters in Melville Thursday, Alicia Barton, chief executive of the New York Energy Research and Development Authority, called the consortium and its Long Island location "a major stake in the ground" for New York's future as an offshore wind nexus for East Coast states. "It's a terrific win for New York and for Long Island," she said. NYSERDA will match the federal grant with \$20.5 million of its own.

A chief purpose of the public-private consortium, she said, is to drive down costs for all elements of offshore wind, from design, manufacturing, and assembly to operations and maintenance. The federal grant came from the U.S. Department of En-

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ergy.

The goal, Barton said, is to make offshore wind costs competitive with other renewable energy sources such as solar and land-based wind by 2030. There's currently a premium for offshore wind but costs are declining rapidly, she said. For now, the high cost is partly offset by generous federal tax credits, but they have begun winding down and will expire in 2020.

Barton stressed the new consortium, while fostered by the federal grant and state matching

funds, will be an "independent, self-sustaining" entity working with academia, business and government to meet its goals. "It will not be NYSERDA-owned," she said.

The state last year announced its plan to conduct a bid solicitation for at least 800 megawatts of offshore wind this year and next, with 400 megawatts expected to be put out to bid before this year's end. Barton said one reason the state is working so hard to get a solicitation for offshore wind energy bids done by year's

end is to qualify for the largest portion of the credit.

Barton said the state's goal of generating 50 percent of its energy needs by renewable energy by 2030 is "lofty" but "entirely achievable." Offshore wind is expected to make up a large portion of that, with 2,400 megawatts by that time, enough to power up to 1.2 million homes, the state said. The state is eyeing 60 sites for offshore wind port facilities where key components can be made and assembled, she said. About a third are on Long Island.

The state has proposed four offshore wind sites for the waters off Long Island, in areas of water that pose the fewest conflicts with other uses including shipping and commercial fishing. The federal government has proposed several additional areas, including one that lies around 12 miles due south of the Hamptons, but the state doesn't favor that site.

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