

Local Officials Cheer as South Fork Wind Begins Churning Out Electricity

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The view of South Fork Wind from the deck of Cecelia Ann on Tuesday (CT Examiner)

Anthony Nolan caught sight of a turbine at South Fork wind farm for the first time, and smiling like a kid at a science fair, pointed out the ferry window.

“There we can see it. I’m going to get my camera,” said Nolan, a state representative from New London, and a Democrat. “It’s not the same seeing it in pictures on the Internet as coming in person here. It helps us to understand the impact.”

The turbine blades turned slowly, the image of calm as the ship shuddered in the open sea, far beyond the protection of Long Island Sound. Breaking waves wet the windows but it was otherwise cloudless and sunny.

CT Examiner joined a number of state and local officials, employees of Eversource and Ørsted, and union officials aboard the 143-foot Cecelia Ann for what was for most their first look in person at South Fork Wind.

With a maximum generating capacity of 132 megawatts, South Fork is the only commercial-scale offshore wind farm operating in the United States, producing about 6% of the electricity currently generated by Connecticut’s only operating nuclear power plant, Millstone.

South Fork, which went online in March, is the first offshore wind farm to be assembled and staged off the New London State Pier, a project that dates to 2022.

Offshore wind energy development is a priority for the Biden administration’s green agenda which incentivizes a transition to an electrified economy and renewable energy. On the state level, the project is a small step toward fulfilling Connecticut’s goal of net carbon-zero energy for the grid by 2040.

The sight of South Fork in operation is also a rare piece of good news for a project that has been plagued with cost overruns, and which so far has produced few local jobs.

“I could never say the project was excellent,” said Nolan. “But it’s paying off. It’s bringing in millions in taxes, creating local jobs and bringing more activity to our businesses.”

After two hours underway, the *Cecelia Ann* paused close to South Fork Wind’s 12 turbines. Each tower extended out of the water 788 feet, about 56 stories or the height of the

Woolworth Building in Manhattan – taller than any building in Connecticut, according to a voice over a speaker, with blades 319 feet long, longer than a football field.

Spaced a mile apart to ease navigation, the turbines seemed closely spaced against an infinite empty blue plain.

Also visible is a substation that raises the voltage for sending the electricity all the way to Southport, Long Island.

On deck, passengers took selfies like tourists. The mood was joyful and triumphant.

“If you can build this, you can build anything you want,” an Eversource employee told one of his colleagues.

For Ørsted, the photo opportunity was a milestone, allowing the world’s largest developer of offshore wind to show an audience of stakeholders the first tangible achievements of the work out of State Pier, according to David Ortiz, Ørsted’s head of Government Affairs and Market Strategy for the Northeast.

“There were very few jobs and almost no economic activity at New London State Pier before the state decided to make this investment to turn it into an asset for the offshore wind industry,” said Ortiz. “The residents who are being employed as a result of South Fork Wind, now Revolution Wind, Sunrise Wind and projects to come for decades. That is a massive scaling-up of jobs and economic opportunity at New London State Pier that didn’t exist before.”

Port Authority Chair David Kooris expressed pride in the work done, after years of criticism for the project cost and delays.

“I am impressed to see the result of years of effort,” Kooris said. “The turbines, the substation, the transmission lines, all the engineering in a place that 99 percent of Americans will never visit, yet we all benefit from what is done there.”

As the ferry returned to New London harbor, new turbine towers for Revolution Wind could be seen arrayed on State Pier. The towers arrived two weeks earlier and are part of the second Ørsted project to be assembled at State Pier and



State Rep. Anthony Nolan (far right) and various officials posed for photographs of South Fork Wind (CT Examiner)

installed offshore in 2024 and 2025. The first blades are scheduled to arrive on May 23.

Revolution Wind will be constructed and installed at a significantly greater scale – 65 turbines for a generating capacity of 880 megawatts. By 2026, Ørsted plans to start Sunrise Wind, an 84-turbine, 924-megawatt project.

In addition, in March, Ørsted presented yet another project, Starboard Wind, at a wind energy auction held jointly by Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. If awarded, the 1,184-megawatt wind farm would also be staged out of State Pier.

Offshore wind has the support of labor leaders, who are currently in talks with developers to negotiate labor conditions, according to Ed Hawthorne, president of the AFL-CIO Connecticut.

“As a labor movement, we are looking at it as the new industrial revolution, where there are going to be good union jobs,” said Hawthorne. “We need to look at it as an investment in the future because, in our eyes, climate justice and economic justice are one and the same.”