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Nuclear Power, Wind Energy Imperative for Greenhouse Gas Reductions in New England

WASHINGTON, D.C., Jan. 22, 2008—The continued operation of New England's five nuclear power plants and an unprecedented expansion of electricity generation from wind farms will be needed to meet the region's commitment to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, according to a new report by a Boston-based engineering and environmental firm.



Even with at least 10 large new wind farms the size of the proposed Cape Wind project, with greater reliance on natural gas and the premature closure of oil- and coal-fired power plants, the federal operating licenses of the Pilgrim nuclear plant in Massachusetts and the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant must be renewed to meet the emission limits imposed by the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative by the 2019 deadline. The Pilgrim and Vermont Yankee nuclear power plants have filed applications for 20-year license extensions with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Additionally, the Seabrook nuclear power plant in New Hampshire and the two reactors at the Millstone power station in Connecticut must continue to operate, according to the analysis by Polestar Applied Technology Inc.

The analysis concludes that under either a high- or low-electricity growth scenario, the region should add approximately one new major wind project every year for the next decade. To achieve the low-growth scenario, the region's already-strong commitment to energy efficiency would have to increase significantly.

In the high-electricity growth scenario, meeting the RGGI limit will require all of the above, plus the addition of a new nuclear plant.

Entitled "Reducing CO₂ Emissions in New England: The Imperative of Nuclear Power," the study was commissioned by the Nuclear Energy Institute, whose members include energy companies that operate nuclear power plants in New England. NEI is the policy organization for the U.S. nuclear energy industry.

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SUITE 400
1776 I STREET, NW
WASHINGTON, DC
20006-3708
202.739.8000
www.nei.org

Nuclear Energy Vital to Greenhouse Gas Reduction Efforts

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The study was commissioned after 10 Northeastern states developed a plan under the RGGI framework to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—chiefly carbon dioxide—in the electricity sector. The 10 states are Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont.

“If New England is serious about meeting its RGGI commitment then it must become serious about maintaining and even expanding its nuclear generation capacity,” said Polestar’s Stephen Allen, the report’s principal author.

Nuclear energy produces electricity without emitting greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Nationwide, it produces more than 70 percent of the electricity that comes from sources that don’t emit greenhouse gases or controlled pollutants covered by the Clean Air Act. New England’s five reactors produce more than 25 percent of the region’s electricity.

“As New England strives to limit carbon dioxide emissions from the electric power sector, this report makes clear that the region will benefit tremendously from the long-term operation of its nuclear plants,” said Paul Genoa , NEI’s director of policy development.

Paul Afonso, executive director of the New England Energy Alliance, said the analysis by Polestar provides further evidence that New England “cannot take any energy option off the table.

“The region’s growing demand for energy, its growing success with competitive electricity markets and its commitment to reducing greenhouse gases are converging. These events make it clear that energy efficiency, renewable energy, new sources of natural gas supply, expansion of electricity transmission and continued operation of existing nuclear and other power plants are essential elements of a regional energy strategy.”

The Polestar report is attached and also available on NEI’s Web site at: http://nei.org/resourcesandstats/documentlibrary/protectingtheenvironment/reports/reducing_co2_emissions_in_new_england.

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The Nuclear Energy Institute is the nuclear energy industry's policy organization. This news release and additional information about nuclear energy are available at <http://www.nei.org>