

WIND ENERGY

The Team That Kept Building Even When the Funding Got Complicated



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“The future belongs to those who show up for it.”

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University of Maine, Advanced Structures and Composites Center

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The turbine, called VoltturnUS+, is a quarter scale version of a 15 megawatt floating platform designed and patented at the University of Maine. Unlike traditional offshore turbines bolted to the sea floor, VoltturnUS floats on a concrete hull, which makes it possible to generate power in the deep, steep waters off the Maine coast that fixed bottom turbines simply cannot reach. The hull was fabricated and assembled by Maine contractors, then towed 30 miles down the Penobscot River to Castine Harbor, a logistical feat in its own right.

When a portion of the project's federal funding was unexpectedly interrupted last year, the University of Maine team did not stand down. They found a way to move forward, towing the platform into place and mooring it off Castine, where it has been collecting performance data through 2026 on how the hull design handles wind and wave motion. That data will help determine whether floating turbines like this one can eventually be built at commercial scale, not just in Maine but anywhere the ocean gets too deep for conventional offshore wind.

This is the kind of quiet persistence that does not always make headlines. A team of engineers, researchers and local contractors kept a first of its kind project moving forward because they believed in what it could mean for Maine and for the future of ocean energy. That belief, and the work behind it, deserves to be recognized.



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The Small Office Punching Way Above Its Weight

Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources, led by Chris Kearns

Rhode Island is the smallest state in New England, but under Chris Kearns the Office of Energy Resources runs like an operation five times its size.

This month OER released an updated Incentives Landing Page built to do something surprisingly rare in this field, actually make it simple. Residents, businesses and communities can now find every available energy program in one place, organized by category and pulling together resources from state and federal partners so nobody has to hunt through a dozen different websites to figure out what they qualify for.

That kind of clarity has become a signature of Kearns' leadership. Earlier this year OER rolled out 35 million dollars in new incentives for household heat pump systems through the New England Heat Pump Accelerator, built around a pass through model that removes the upfront cost barrier entirely for families and simplifies the process for the contractors doing the installs. In May, Rhode Island became the first state in New England to expand the federal Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates program to moderate income households, launching a pilot across eleven municipalities including Pawtucket, East Providence and Newport, with a statewide expansion planned to follow.

The results are showing up in the data. A new scorecard from the Brookings Institution ranked Rhode Island among the top tier of all 50 states for EV policy readiness, scoring a 10 out of 13, in the same company as Massachusetts, New York and Connecticut. For a state with a fraction of the population and budget of its neighbors, that is a remarkable showing.

None of it happens without the people behind it. Just this month OER hosted its third annual summer networking event, packing a room with the utilities, nonprofits and community partners, including Browning the Green Space and Emerald Cities Collaborative, who make Rhode Island's clean energy work possible. Anyone who has spent time around Chris Kearns and his team knows the feeling in that room was not just professional. It was genuine pride in the work and in each other.

Rhode Island may be small on the map, but under this team's leadership it keeps proving that size has nothing to do with impact. We are proud to call this team part of our region.

COMPANY SPOTLIGHT

Hannaford

The Grocery Chain Proving Sustainability Is a Long Game, Not a Press Release

Some companies chase headlines about sustainability. Hannaford just quietly keeps hitting its targets.

The Scarborough, Maine based grocer, which operates more than 180 stores across five Northeast states, recently confirmed it has reached 50 percent renewable electricity across its operations, a real milestone built on more than 30 community solar partnerships spanning Maine, Massachusetts and New York. That progress has been years in the making, and it is exactly the kind of steady, unglamorous follow through that turns a bold pledge into an actual result.

Hannaford is not stopping at the meter. This month the company announced a first of its kind partnership with the Gulf of Maine Research Institute to study how climate related risks, including flooding and extreme weather, could affect two of its Portland area stores. GMRI has traditionally reserved this kind of climate vulnerability assessment for municipalities and coastal towns, not individual businesses, which makes Hannaford the first major Maine retailer to bring that level of scientific rigor directly to its own stores. The findings from the pilot at the Forest Avenue and Cottage Road locations will help shape a resilience plan for Hannaford's full footprint across the Northeast.

Hannaford Senior Vice President Peter Forester said the company decided to go deeper with GMRI after seeing long term flood projections for one of its coastal sites, a decision that speaks to the kind of forward thinking leadership this region needs more of. Hannaford has also long led its industry on the fundamentals, becoming the first large scale grocery chain in its market to achieve zero food waste to landfill, and its store in Augusta, Maine remains North America's first LEED Platinum certified supermarket.

Hannaford has been part of daily life in this region for generations. What makes its clean energy work so meaningful is that none of it was required. The company chose to lead, quietly and consistently, because it was the right thing for the communities that have supported it for decades. That is the kind of leadership worth celebrating.



NEWS CORNER



Six New England States Move Forward on Northern Maine Transmission and Generation Project

Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont and neighboring states are coordinating on a major effort to connect at least 1,200 megawatts of renewable generation in Northern Maine to the ISO New England grid. The Maine Public Utilities Commission reopened its bid window earlier this year to widen the pool of proposals, with the goal of spreading the cost of new transmission infrastructure across the region so Maine ratepayers pay a smaller share of the total project cost.

bangordailynews.com



Boston Startup Reservoir Raises 8 Million Dollars for Smart Heat Pump Water Heaters

Reservoir, a Boston based startup, raised an 8 million dollar seed round to bring its predictive heat pump water heaters to more homes. The units learn a household's hot water habits and preheat in advance, cutting energy use by roughly 75 percent compared with standard electric water heaters. The company has already installed nearly 100 units around Boston and plans to reach about 1,000 installations by the end of next year.

heatmap.news



Somerville's Form Energy Raises 750 Million Dollars for Multi Day Battery Storage

Form Energy, based in Somerville, Massachusetts, closed a 750 million dollar funding round led by T. Rowe Price, bringing its total capital raised to more than 2 billion dollars. The company's iron air batteries can store electricity for up to 100 hours, far longer than typical lithium ion systems, and the new funding will help scale up its battery manufacturing plant in West Virginia. It is the second largest venture funding round for a Massachusetts company this year, after Commonwealth Fusion Systems.

bostonglobe.com



Five New England Governors Push for Close Scrutiny of the NextEra Dominion Merger

Governors across five New England states, led by Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey, formally raised concerns this week over NextEra Energy's proposed acquisition of Dominion Energy, urging federal regulators to closely scrutinize the deal's potential impact on ratepayer bills, market competition and grid reliability. If approved, the merger would place both of the region's remaining nuclear power plants under one company's control.

ctmirror.org

"CLIMATE CHANGE IS THE GREATEST THREAT TO OUR EXISTENCE IN OUR SHORT HISTORY ON THIS PLANET. NOBODY'S GOING TO BUY THEIR WAY OUT OF ITS EFFECTS."

– MARK RUFFALO, ACTOR & ENVIRONMENTALIST