

RECHARGE

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'Let's go build it!' | US offshore wind digs in with landmark South Fork ground-breaking

South Fork ground breaking. Dignitaries gather for the start of South Fork construction. Photo: Orsted



Chiefs of joint developers Orsted and Eversource join Secretary of Interior and New York governor to inaugurate what will be the country's second industrial-scale sector project

By **Tim Ferry**

Work on the US' South Fork offshore wind farm, the country's **second commercial-scale sector project**, has officially begun, with a formal groundbreaking ceremony on Long Island where production from the 130MW development will come ashore the end of next year.

The project developers – a joint venture between Dane Orsted and local utility Eversource -- took the occasion to announce their final investment decision on the South Fork “codifying” the company’s commitment to the plan ahead of the event in Wainscott.

“The harsh impacts and costly realities of climate change are all too familiar on Long Island, but today as we break ground on New York's first offshore wind project we are delivering on the promise of a cleaner, greener path forward that will benefit generations to come,” said state governor Kathleen Hochul.

“This one project will generate enough clean renewable energy to power 70,000 homes every single year and eliminate up to 6 million tons of carbon emissions,” said Hochul, who was joined at the groundbreaking by Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, CEO David Hardy and Eversource CEO Joe Nolan, along with labour leaders and environmental activists.

Halland stated: “Today marks another momentous step in our work to create a robust and sustainable clean energy future. And the best part is that we're just getting started.”

Hardy, **who in a recent interview with Recharge** spoke of the “unique, differentiated opportunity that offshore wind brings”, said: “We’re now transitioning from the dream of what offshore wind could be to the reality of building projects.

“Now let's go build this wind farm!”

South Fork follows the 800MW Vineyard Wind project off coastal Massachusetts, which began construction last November. The project, a joint venture between Iberdrola's US subsidiary Avangrid and Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners, is expected to be commissioned in 2024.

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The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the agency charged with managing offshore wind in federal waters, expects to approve over 12GW of capacity next year towards the national goal of **30GW of offshore wind power by 2030**.



New York state leads the US with over 9GW of offshore wind plant planned by 2035, forming a substantial component of its net-zero power goals by 2040. The state has over **4.3GW of capacity currently under development**, and earlier this month **Hochul announced over \$500m investment** into port and supply chain capacity.

BOEM last week announced a lease auction for acreage with up to 7GW of potential offshore wind capacity in the **New York Bight** south of Long Island and east of New Jersey, a portion of which will feed the New York grid.

Located 19 miles (30km) south of Block Island, Rhode Island, South Fork has been under development for nearly a decade, and was granted a power purchase agreement by the **Long Island Power Authority (LIPA)** in 2017

The project has stirred controversy during its long development, however, and a lawsuit is pending in Suffolk County Supreme Court filed by the Government Justice Centre on behalf of a private citizen alleging that the project's award violated LIPA's own procurement process and mandates.

Further lawsuits filed on behalf of local impacted fisheries are also to be expected. When contacted about these lawsuits by *Recharge*, Orsted declined to comment.

The Biden administration touts the sector for not only generating green power but employment and investment, with up to 70,000 jobs expected to be created over the next decade.

"South Fork groundbreaking is more than just symbolic; it means that offshore wind jobs are here," said Ross Gould, vice president of supply chain development at industry association the Business Network for Offshore Wind.

South Fork's construction and operations plan targets offshore construction beginning in mid-2023, with the end of that year tentatively scheduled for commissioning.