Maine Governor's Energy Office

Draft Maine Energy Plan Overview and Objectives
Monday, December 16, 2024
4:00pm – 5:00pm – Virtual Meeting via Zoom
Meeting Summary

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On December 16, 2024, the Maine Governor's Energy Office (GEO) hosted a public meeting to share an overview of Maine's draft Energy Plan. Approximately 155 participants joined the hour-long public meeting. This was the fifth in a series of public meetings held in 2023 and 2024 on the Energy Plan and was built upon the previous public meeting held in November that included a summary of findings from the draft technical report that underpins the Energy Plan.

In the meeting, GEO Director Dan Burgess provided a recap of the Maine Energy Plan process, key takeaways from the draft Technical Report, available online (PDF link), and discussed how the Energy Plan interacts with other long-term planning in the state, including Maine's Climate Action Plan. Dan then went on to summarize the objectives and strategies offered by the draft Energy Plan. This was followed by an opportunity for interactive comments and participant Q&A.

GEO is accepting public comments on the draft Maine Energy Plan, available here. Please submit comments via email to geo@maine.gov no later than December 30, 2024.

Presentations

Dan Burgess, Governor's Energy Office (GEO) Director, provided opening remarks and background on the comprehensive Maine Energy Plan, reviewed key findings from the draft technical report, and discussed how GEO is incorporating public comments in the draft report (slides 1-10). Then, Dan introduced and outlined the draft Maine Energy Plan, consisting of five core objectives and their respective strategies. The objectives are: 1) deliver affordable energy for Maine people and businesses 2) ensure Maine's energy systems are reliable and resilient in the face of growing challenges 3) responsibly advance clean energy 4) deploy efficient technologies to reduce energy costs and 5) expand clean energy career opportunities for Maine people and advance innovation (slides 11-17). Finally, Dan discussed next steps, including a request for public comments.

David Plumb, Consensus Building Institute (CBI), moderated this webinar and facilitated an interactive Q&A portion.

Public Q&A and Comments

David Plumb conducted an interactive Mentimeter poll which allowed participants to type responses to two questions:

- Q) What are you most excited about in this Energy Plan?
    - Respondents mentioned reduced energy costs, energy storage opportunities, reliability and security, and clean energy solutions.
- Q) What else should GEO consider as it finalized and implements the Plan?

    - Respondents mentioned siting, infrastructure and interconnection needs, transmission, and plans around offshore wind.

This session included an opportunity for participants to ask questions and provide comments on the draft Energy Plan. Themes are categorized and summarized below, including responses provided by GEO:

- **Demand and distribution:** One participant was encouraged that time-of-use pricing was considered in the Energy Plan and believes that energy flexibility and load management is the largest and most cost-efficient opportunity for Maine. Another participant asked whether demand growth from data centers and data farms was considered in the modeling.
    - A) The technical report model incorporates known policy and load growth through 2050. While the model does not specifically posit a large growth in data centers, the topic is something that GEO will consider and monitor on an ongoing basis. GEO also noted that utilities are required to conduct regular grid planning exercises to ensure resources are available to meet predicted demand.
- **Energy storage:** One participant was curious about utility-scale energy storage and the advantages and disadvantages compared to distributed energy resources and household-level storage. Another participant asked how best to support commercial and industrial level energy storage projects.
    - A) Energy storage is a critical component of an affordable, reliable, and clean energy future, and the draft Energy Plan reflects that. The draft Plan outlines the importance of both behind-the-meter storage (which is supported by Efficiency Maine's demand response initiative for residential, commercial, and industrial customers) and front-of-the meter larger scale storage projects. GEO is also encouraged by a new long duration energy storage project planned for Lincoln, Maine, and a large utility-scale project under construction in Gorham.
- **Offshore wind:** Was a "pathway" evaluated where offshore wind adoption is slowed? How often will the model be revisited as real-world data becomes available? What is the status of port advancement?
    - A) GEO remains committed to pursuing offshore wind as a home-grown clean energy resource which has the potential to bring significant economic development to Maine while reducing the state's reliance on fossil fuels. The model used in the draft technical report did not anticipate commercial offshore wind resources coming online until the late 2030s. Maine continues to move forward with planning and research to support the development of an offshore wind port.
- **Nuclear:** Is there any change in looking at nuclear power in Maine? What about small modular nuclear reactors (SMRs)?
    - A) The draft technical analysis demonstrates that maintaining the region's existing nuclear fleet is important as it represents approximately 30 percent of New England's capacity (~3.5 GW). The analysis considered nuclear as a potential resource, but the model did not select small modular reactors (SMRs) or large-scale nuclear as the most cost-effective ways to achieve Maine's goals and statutory commitments.
- **Transmission:** Was reconductoring with improved capacity lines considered?
    - A) GEO mentions reconductoring and other advanced transmission technologies as possibilities to upgrade and better utilize existing transmission. There are important opportunities regarding transmission technology both the hardware and software side, and GEO is committed to engage with others see how to best pursue them.

- **Hydroelectric generation:** One participant noted that Maine has extensive hydro resources, but did not see any mentions of hydroelectric generation or dams in the Energy Plan.
    - A) Hydropower is an important part of Maine's clean energy mix and is included in the draft Energy Plan. Hydro is important to both Maine and New England as a region and is a qualifying resource in Maine's Renewable Portfolio Standard.
- **Federal funding:** Have federal Inflation Reduction Act funds already been dispersed to Maine to use in the future? Are those funds at risk with a new federal budget in January?
    - GEO has received over $200 million in federal funding which it is working with partners to administer, and an additional $600 million has been awarded to other entities in Maine and the region. Each grant is in a different point in the award process, but many of the awards have been contracted or are in the contract phase. Many of IRA and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) awards are incorporated throughout the draft Energy Plan and draft technical report.
- **Medium- and heavy-duty vehicles:** Does the Energy Plan consider heavy duty trucking and maritime fuels?
    - GEO recently supported, alongside the Maine Department of Transportation and Governor's Office of Policy, Innovation and the Future, the development and publication of a Medium- and Heavy-Duty Electric Vehicle Roadmap. GEO relied on this roadmap to support the development of the draft Energy Plan.
- **Northern Maine:** How much electricity does the model consider sourcing from Northern Maine?
    - GEO recognizes the importance of unlocking generation from Northern Maine for the state and region. GEO highlighted a recent New England States Committee on Electricity (NESCOE) filing request for regional ISO-NE procurement for transmission upgrades to unlock northern Maine resources. GEO remains energized by regional opportunities to coordinate to secure affordable clean energy to Maine and region.

Dan Burgess provided closing remarks and next steps, emphasizing that GEO is seeking input and public comment on the draft Energy Plan at this time. Dan noted that this isn't the last opportunity to engage, and implementing this plan will require sustained engagement and pathways for feedback, so folks should stay tuned. Comments and questions can be sent to geo@maine.gov.