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Positioning Quonset as a hub for alternative energy industry

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Any good business these days must confront the ever-pressing threats to the environment and develop a plan for adapting measures that will help preserve the planet. It's with that imperative in mind that the Quonset Business Park is positioned to be a major hub in a statewide Rhode Island initiative to embrace the emerging alternative energy industry.

From helping in the transportation of a giant wind turbine across the Narragansett Bay to ramping up plans for a major wind farm off the shores of Rhode Island to approving the lease of a green energy company, Quonset is well positioned to provide much of the labor and resources necessary for the state to carry out its commitment to clean, renewable fuel. We are at the forefront of progress when it comes to approaching our natural world with care.

Highlighting the business park's ability to serve as a staging area for large wind projects, Quonset's old carrier pier was the setting for the loading and barge transport of a massive wind turbine across Narragansett Bay last month. Quonset business, Specialty Diving Services moved three massive parts of the turbine, which were too heavy to be carried across the Jamestown Bridge, by barge to Newport. The 167-ton turbine, manufactured in Quebec, was headed for Portsmouth where it will produce up to 60% of the town's municipal energy.

And that's just one example of how Quonset has helped propel clean energy plans forward.

Last month, governor Donald Carcieri announced the state had reached an agreement with New Jersey-based Deepwater Wind to construct a wind energy development, which will provide 1.3 million megawatt hours per year of renewable energy - 15% of all electricity used in the state.

The production schedule puts the project on pace to be the first off-shore wind farm in North America, including the construction of a major manufacturing facility at Quonset. That will bring hundreds of new green collar jobs to the business park, boosting the economy as well as helping the environment. Deepwater Wind will base all projects from Delaware to Maine at its Rhode Island location.

In his annual State of the State address, Carcieri hailed Quonset as a capable hub for the emerging energy industry in the Northeast. "We have moved aggressively to make Rhode Island home to the first offshore wind project in the nation. Deepwater Wind, the company that will develop the project, will help us reach our goal of 20% of our state's energy being derived from renewable resources."

Also on the topic of renewable energy, Quonset Development Corp.'s board approved the lease of 7.4 acres to Alterra Energy Services. The Washington, D.C.-based clean fuel company received approve for a 30-year contract for operating a blending, storage and distribution facility for biodiesel at Quonset. It will include a rail and truck loading station as well as office facilities.

Alterra will provide alternative fuel blends for both heating and transportation purposes, meeting a growing demand and seeking to be the preferred wholesale supplier of biodiesel in the Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts regions. Its work will help the area reach federal mandates

from the Environmental Protection Agency for 500 million gallons of renewable biomass diesel fuel to be used in 2009, increasing to 1 billion gallons in 2012. Locally speaking, Massachusetts recently passed the Clean Energy Biofuels Act, requiring a minimum percentage of biofuel as a component in all diesel fuel and heating oil in the state. That means 2% in 2009 and 5% in 2012.

By approving proposals like Alterra Energy's and engaging in projects such as Deepwater Wind and the wind turbine transportation to Portsmouth, Quonset has shown itself as a capable leader in a changing world. Not only do we care enough to help advance the emerging renewable energy industry, but we have the space and resources necessary for implementing that goal.

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