Renewables Potential is Great; ISO New England Study

“Significant amounts” of potential wind resources could be added to New England’s transmission system, with offshore wind integration offering the most cost-effective use of new and existing transmission, a new study from the region’s grid operator found.

ISO New England released the results of the study, which evaluates renewable resource potential in the region as well as the economic and environmental impacts of renewables development, at the request of New England’s six governors. The study focused primarily on wind development.

The study found that annual wholesale electricity prices would be generally lower with the addition of renewable resources that have low or no fuel costs (such as wind) and by the reduction of electricity use through demand resources. New transmission investment would be necessary to move energy from renewable resources to consumers throughout New England, according to the study, with offshore wind making the most sense from a transmission perspective. Not surprisingly, the study also found that lower levels of sulfur dioxide, nitrogren oxide, and carbon dioxide emissions result when low-carbon emitting resources are added to the grid.

“We have an abundance of native renewable resource potential in New England,” said ISO New England President and CEO Gordon van Welie. “Before the states now are questions as to how much regional renewable development should be pursued and at what cost. Tapping into these available resources can create potential benefits but would require new transmission to move power from where it is produced to where it is consumed. The concepts outlined in this study provide New England with an improved ability to compare and contrast the options before it, both within the region and beyond our borders.”

Source: Wind Energy Weekly, 18 September 2009