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Katherine Joyce, an attorney at **Bernstein Shur**, sees a multi-billion industry in harnessing wind power. She specializes in the complex permitting process that has accompanied the industry.



PHOTO / TIM GREENWAY

Women making an impact

The wind industry's relative youth means fewer traditional barriers

BY JON MARCUS

Tourists visiting the Portland waterfront stop to watch the screeching seagulls coasting in the gentle wind.

To them, the drifting birds are a bit of local atmosphere. But what Katherine Joyce sees in the onshore breeze is a multibillion-dollar industry.

Joyce is an attorney at Bernstein Shur in Portland who specializes in the complex

permitting process needed to harness wind for power, a cause to which she's clearly devoted.

"Think of the resources here," she says, gesturing seaward from a Commercial Street coffee shop. "What other state has this much space — *and* wind?"

Maine leads New England in the amount of power it generates from wind. But there remain substantial obstacles here. The high

cost of and environmental impact of running transmission lines to connect far-flung wind farms to the electrical grid is one. Another is a thicket of regulation that contributes to the fact that only one in five projects in the Northeast actually ever gets built, according to the Wakefield, Mass.-based consulting firm Energy Security Analysis Inc.

In addition to being an evangelist for alternative energy, there's something else Joyce represents: She's one of a surprising number of women in Maine prominent in the fast-growing industry.

It's surprising because nationwide women hold only 12% of jobs in the business, according to research by the women's advocacy group Catalyst.

"It's the same thing we see across most high-tech industries," says Kristen Graf, executive director of the national group Women of Wind Energy. "There is a rapidly increasing number of women entering these



Lawyer **Hallie Gilman** at **First Wind's** Portland office.

PHOTO / TIM GREENWAY

fields, but the changeover time and the retention of women has never been as strong as we'd like, and that's a pattern we see in wind energy as well."

That national pattern isn't helped by the fact that, in spite of alternative energy's meteoric growth, far fewer women than men enter the occupations that principally fuel it. Barely 14% of engineers and architects are women, and women make up only 2% of electricians, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. That's unlikely to change soon, since colleges and universities continue to produce four times more male than female engineers.

Even in Maine, "We are frequently the only women in the room," Joyce says. "We are usually representing male clients in front of male regulatory bodies."

But the fact that wind energy is still a comparatively new industry means there are also fewer traditional barriers for those women who want to move in, and move up. And Maine, with its two degrees of separation, is small enough to offer opportunities like that, these women say.

When alternative-energy companies needed someone to create the first-ever tax increment financing in Maine's so-called unorganized territories — special arrangements allowing sudden windfalls of tax revenues from huge new projects to be spent on economic development — they came to Joan Fortin, who had already crafted similar plans for other kinds of ventures in incorporated towns and counties downstate.

"There was no 65-year-old guy in my firm who had already done 25 of these, because no one had ever done any," says Fortin, chairwoman of the municipal-and-regulatory practice group at Bernstein Shur. "And that was my entrée into wind."

Almost all the rules and regulations governing alternative energy in Maine are new, Joyce echoes. "So while there are plenty of the generic old white men in the business world we work in, we're all learning together. We all have equal footing."

Hallie Gilman thinks so, too. Gilman is associate general counsel at First Wind, whose 57-megawatt Stetson wind farm in

the unorganized territories just celebrated its fifth anniversary, and which has also built three other wind projects in Maine and has three more in the planning stages.

The industry rewards creativity, "as opposed to experience and seniority, because everything we're doing is new," says Gilman, who works from the company's Portland office. "So there isn't the mindset that there's only one way to do things, or one playbook, or a right answer."

That means there are fewer of the barriers women often face in more traditional industries, says Juliet Brown, who also works on wind energy as chair of the Environmental Law Group at Portland's Verrill Dana. "You don't have the old-boy network."

In fact, Maine's alternative-energy sector has spun off a sort of new-girl network. The women in the industry largely know each other, and many are or have been members of the Maine State Bar Association's natural resources and environmental law section, which Joyce previously chaired.

"We kind of lift each other up," Joyce says. "We all know what it's like when you have

to slog through a week where everybody has something to say about what you're wearing or asks you what happens if your kids get sick." But these are women, she says, "who really like what they're doing and are not going to let some schmo faze them."

Gilman's route to wind began on the Charles River in Boston — not in a sailboat, but as assistant coach of the Radcliffe varsity crew.

"I loved working with very, very capable young women and I loved racing, but I also loved the feeling that I was helping them develop the skills that they would ultimately draw on when they went out into the world to help solve very difficult, complex problems," Gilman says. "At one point, I realized I might like to go out into the world and help solve very difficult, complex problems myself."

She's found one.

There is support for wind from some environmental groups — Environment Maine, for instance, credits Maine's wind industry with preventing more than 534,000 tons of carbon dioxide from being released into the atmosphere — but opposition from others, on top of chronic political uncertainty in Washington.

"The industry has some very vocal opponents who are well funded, who are very ideological, and who are motivated to show up at public hearings and legislative hearings, and that tends to be the noise that you hear," Brown says.

Signals from Augusta have also been mixed. Gov. Paul LePage contends that new forms of power generation have been driving up utility bills and benefiting special interests at the expense of Maine ratepayers. He told the Skowhegan Chamber of Commerce that a wind turbine on the campus of the University of Maine-Presque Isle, had a motor to make it look like it was generating power even if the air was still. (The university categorically denies it.)

"We have people in Maine who say that wind is the answer. And it is the answer — for people who lobby for wind," the governor told a town-hall meeting in Newport.

For its part, the Maine Renewable Energy Association says alternative energy has pumped more than \$1.1 billion into the state's economy and created 12,000 temporary and permanent jobs. In a poll conducted by the Portland-based Atlantic SMS Group on behalf of the association, 88% of registered Maine voters said they support wind power.

"It's really the only major industry I know of that is seriously interested in expanding in Maine. And we could use the shot in the arm," Joyce says.

But LePage has sought to overturn a 2008 law signed by then-Gov. John Baldacci setting the target of 3,000 megawatt hours produced by wind by 2020 — enough to power about 900,000 homes. The state is only about a sixth of the way to that goal. Through 2012, wind energy generated 887,000 megawatt hours, a 25.5 percent gain from the previous year, according to the most recent data collected by the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Though a proposal to build a floating wind-power project in the waters off Monhegan Island, called Maine Aqua Ventus I, is moving forward, it lost momentum last month when key federal funding was steered to other projects around the country. And backers of another offshore project, Hywind, pulled out, citing shifting state policies.

"Most people I talk to agree that we need to find new long-term energy solutions, but not everyone agrees that wind is the answer," concedes Katie Chapman, project manager in Maine for Houston-based EDP Renewables North America, the U.S. branch of a Spanish company that has been trying since 2007 to build New England's largest wind farm in Aroostook County, and is also considering other sites in Maine.

One solution, Chapman says: "I like the 'Who's your farmer?' bumper stickers because they draw attention to the importance of knowing where your food comes from. I wish there was an equally catchy, 'Who's your generator?' so people would be encouraged to take responsibility for their own energy use and support solutions rather than oppose them."

On the up side, in addition to plenty of wind and a lot of uninhabited space, Maine has willing buyers in other New England states that have passed laws requiring power companies to generate specified amounts of electricity from renewable sources.

"There's a lot going on," says Fortin. And women in Maine are playing an outsized part. "These are huge projects, and it's really nice to see women in those roles."

But the women in it say the industry has a long way to go on that score, too.

"There are a lot of opportunities in this field for innovation and for tackling things in new ways," says Graf, of Women of Wind Energy. "That said, it's still part of the larger energy and utility industry that has a long history of following the status quo."

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