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Baker-Polito Administration Files Hydropower Legislation to Increase Access to Clean, Cost-Effective Renewable Energy
Proposal Works to Minimize Climate Change Impacts, Achieve Global Warming Solutions Act

BOSTON – Today, in a continued effort to stabilize New England’s electricity rates while meeting the Commonwealth’s Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) goals, the Baker-Polito Administration filed legislation to diversify the state’s energy portfolio through the procurement of cost-effective, hydropower generation. This legislation will not only increase the reliability of New England’s electricity system, but will provide Massachusetts’ ratepayers with a clean, cost-competitive alternative to coal and oil generation.

“This legislation is critical to reducing our carbon footprint, meeting the goals of the Global Warming Solutions Act and protecting ratepayers already stuck by sky high energy prices,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “Increasing the flow of hydroelectric power into Massachusetts and New England diversifies our energy portfolio and makes it clear we are ready to collaborate with our neighboring states to secure cost-effective, carbon-reducing energy solutions for the region.”

“The plan submitted by the Baker-Polito Administration strikes an important balance between climate and environmental awareness, and Massachusetts’ need for clean, cost-conscience generation resources,” said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton. “As part of the Administration’s balanced approach to
making the necessary investments in our regional energy infrastructure, this legislation will enable the state to provide the needed generation capacity in the face of power plant retirements, while positioning the Commonwealth to achieve our Global Warming Solutions Act goals.”

An Act Relative to Energy Sector Compliance with the Global Warming Solutions Act, filed in the State Senate, seeks to require Massachusetts utilities to jointly, and competitively, solicit long-term contracts for clean energy generation resources and associated transmission together with the Department of Energy Resources.

“This legislation will provide a crucial opportunity to secure the delivery of additional clean energy resources for the Commonwealth,” said Department of Energy Resources Commissioner Judith Judson. “As the state’s energy office, we are committed to addressing our energy challenges and ensuring the procurement of clean energy resources is fair, transparent and is ultimately a cost-effective energy solution for the ratepayers of Massachusetts.”

In addition to the benefits this legislation will bring to the regional electricity market, clean energy generation will position Massachusetts to reach its ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets. The Baker-Polito Administration remains committed to achieving the emission reduction goals of the GWSA – a 25 percent reduction of emissions below 1990 levels by 2020. This legislation will enable Massachusetts to achieve over 5 percent of this required emissions reduction which is equivalent to taking approximately 1 million cars off the road, or replacing fossil fuel with renewable energy to power 1.2 million homes.

“Diversifying energy production makes sense as Massachusetts works to reach its Global Warming Solutions Act targets,” said Vivien Li, President of the Boston Harbor Association. “The legislation proposed by the administration strikes an important balance by including hydroelectric power and Class 1 RPS-eligible resources without overwhelming the market with one form of generation. I commend the Baker-Polito Administration for its leadership in helping to address impacts of climate change within the Commonwealth.”

While the Baker-Polito Administration is focused on the pursuit of clean base load hydroelectric generation, this legislation does not preclude intermittent renewable energy resources, such as wind, from participating in the solicitation provided the renewable resources is supported by hydropower. Additionally, the legislation will permit Massachusetts utilities to collaborate with other New England states, including Connecticut and Rhode Island, in the procurement of hydroelectric resources. The resulting multi-state partnership will enable the Commonwealth to procure clean generation resources in the most cost-effective manner possible.
“I applaud Governor Baker for pursuing legislation to ensure cleaner, cheaper, more reliable energy for his state and all of New England,” said Connecticut Governor Dannel P. Malloy, Chairman of the Coalition of Northeastern Governors. “Earlier this year, I hosted in Connecticut the New England Governors for a Regional Energy Forum to discuss a regional solution to address our collective energy transmission issues. We are happy to partner with our neighbors and coordinate ways to provide cheaper, cleaner and reliable energy for New England residents.”

As a pivotal component of the Baker-Polito Administration’s mission to diversifying the Commonwealth’s energy portfolio, hydroelectric procurement ensures affordability and reliability for Massachusetts ratepayers through a balanced approach of renewable energy investments, while meeting the goals set forth in the GWSA.

“Hydropower acquisition could be a huge additional step forward in helping Massachusetts meet the standards of the Global Warming Solutions Act by reducing greenhouse gas emissions,” said Senate President Pro Tempore Marc R. Pacheco (D-Taunton). “I am pleased that the administration is taking steps to meet these goals. The proposal on hydropower could provide additional savings to the ratepayers, while at the same time providing economic benefits in the clean energy economy. This proposal provides the opportunity to both reduce our carbon footprint and ‘green up’ the bottom line.”

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