Typical ISO-New England Electricity Generation Mix at Peak Load
Southern New England is natural gas constrained. Plentiful and inexpensive gas from the Marcellus Shale region must pass a bottleneck coming from New York to New England. Maine is further constrained by a pipeline bottleneck in Massachusetts. With increasing frequency these constraints are resulting in high prices and short supplies for gas-fired electricity generators, which normally provide about half of our load. The modern gas generation plant in Veazie operated at under 10% of capacity last year. At times of peak load, usually the hottest and coldest weekdays, ISO-NE gas generation is being cut by half because residential and industrial users are using all the available gas. So the ISO-NE grid is increasingly calling upon dirty/expensive oil and coal plants to pick up the peak slack. Meanwhile, whether cold or hot days, peak or off-peak, wind’s contribution to the grid remains insignificant. Maine has spent $1 billion dollars on wind infrastructure, and New England has spent almost as much, not even counting T&D costs.

Too little has been invested in the more critical gas pipeline infrastructure that will provide us true economic and environmental benefits.

This misallocation of scarce resources on wind infrastructure is not only driving up rates and draining our economy, it is increasing downwind pollution in Maine. Therefore the “avoided emissions” rationale for wind power’s favorable treatment is not only unwarranted, it is actually harmful.