



From family business to offshore pioneer: powering America's clean energy future

One Rhode Island-based operator has quietly taken the helm in America's growing offshore wind sector. Atlantic Wind Transfers is not only moving technicians and equipment across the waves but also redefining what local excellence looks like in a field traditionally led by international players. With US-built vessels, American crews, and a reputation built on safety, innovation, and seamanship, the team has established itself as a trusted presence behind the turbines driving the nation's clean energy transition.

While attention often focuses on turbines, cables, and megawatts, the daily operations that keep these assets running depend on a dedicated network of mariners and vessels. Transporting people and materials to installations miles offshore is not a supporting role but a critical function that ensures efficiency and uptime.

At the center of this effort is AWT, headquartered in Quonset Point, Rhode Island. Founded by mariner and entrepreneur Charles A. Donadio Jr., who brings over 30 years of hands-on maritime experience, the operator has helped define what a modern US offshore wind service provider can be. Its track record proves that American innovation and local ownership are fully capable of leading in a rapidly evolving industry.

Building the backbone of America's offshore wind

The US offshore wind sector is still in its early chapters compared with Europe's decades-old market. Yet the pace of development along the East Coast, from Rhode Island to Virginia, has accelerated rapidly. As new projects come online, the need for reliable, compliant, American-built crew transfer vessels (CTVs) has become one of the most pressing priorities in the supply chain.

CTVs are the workhorses of every offshore wind project. Their mission is to safely transport technicians and cargo between shore bases and offshore installations in all weather conditions. When vessels cannot sail, maintenance stops, turbines stand idle, and megawatts go unproduced. In this high stakes environment, reliability and seamanship are mission critical.

This is where AWT has earned its reputation. With US-built vessels, American crews, and a culture of operational discipline, the team delivers exactly what the renewable energy sector needs: a dependable, domestic partner capable of world class marine logistics.

From ferry docks to the offshore wind frontier

Long before 'offshore wind' entered America's energy vocabulary, Charles Donadio Jr. was building a maritime career rooted in service

and safety. In 1998, he founded Island Hi-Speed Ferry, introducing the first high-speed ferry service to Block Island. Five years later, he launched Rhode Island Fast Ferry, expanding high-speed routes to Martha's Vineyard and developing a successful charter business across the US, the Caribbean, and for the Government of Bermuda. His companies became known for innovation, expertise, and meticulous US Coast Guard compliance.

When construction began on the Block Island Wind Farm, America's first offshore wind project, Donadio saw a new frontier. Drawing on decades of operational experience, he founded AWT in 2013, becoming the first American entrepreneur to establish a CTV company dedicated solely to offshore wind. He personally oversaw the design and construction of the Atlantic Pioneer, the first US-built CTV to support the Block Island project, which remains in service today.

That milestone marked more than a business success; it represented a turning point for the American maritime industry. Donadio's early investment demonstrated that domestic shipyards and operators could meet the technical standards of Europe's offshore supply chain while remaining fully compliant with US regulations.

Safety and training at the core of operations

Operating dozens of miles from shore requires more than modern vessels; it demands skilled crews trained to handle unpredictable weather, complex transfers, and demanding maintenance schedules. AWT's safety culture begins long before a mariner steps aboard. Every crew member undergoes rigorous onboarding and continuous training that exceeds Coast Guard and project-specific requirements. The team enforces strict operational protocols and invests in constant improvement through drills, simulations, and cross-training with turbine technicians.

That philosophy reflects Donadio's personal belief, shaped by years at sea: 'The ocean rewards preparation, not shortcuts.' His approach emphasizes foresight and discipline, ensuring that every person who departs in the morning returns home safely at day's end.

The results speak for themselves. AWT maintains an outstanding safety record with incident-free operations across tens of thousands of offshore transfers, earning the trust of developers, government agencies, and contractors throughout the industry.

Innovation: next-generation CTVs

AWT's forward-looking mindset is reflected in its newest vessels, the Atlantic Resolute and Atlantic Endurance, designed by Chartwell Marine of Southampton, UK, and built in the United States. These next-generation CTVs are EPA Tier IV-compliant to meet the Environmental Protection Agency's strictest emissions standards and equipped with state-of-the-art navigation systems, advanced MAN engines, ZF gears, and Hamilton Waterjets. Each vessel is optimized for efficiency, comfort, reliability, and safety, setting a new standard for US-built offshore support craft.

By investing in cutting-edge design and technology, the operator continues to raise the bar for sustainability and performance in the US market, delivering innovation that aligns with its commitment to environmental responsibility.

Vessel reliability and uptime

In offshore wind operations, uptime is everything. Every hour a vessel is offline can impact schedules and productivity. For AWT, reliability is a core mission. The team maintains its fleet to the highest standards through rigorous preventive maintenance, detailed inspections, and a proactive approach to equipment care.

Over the years, it has built trusted partnerships with shipyards, vendors, and suppliers who understand the demands of round-the-clock operations. These relationships ensure rapid access to parts, technical expertise, and support, minimizing downtime and keeping offshore maintenance timelines on track.

Lessons from the front lines of US offshore wind

From supporting the construction of the Block Island Wind Farm to current work on New York



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and Connecticut's Sunrise Wind, and through expanding arrays off the Rhode Island and Virginia coasts, AWT has been part of nearly every major milestone in the nation's offshore wind rollout. Two of its CTVs, the Atlantic Pioneer and Atlantic Endeavor, are secured under long-term contracts exceeding ten years, while the Atlantic Resolute and Atlantic Endurance are available for flexible charters along the East Coast.

Local knowledge matters

US waters differ significantly from Europe's sea states, port infrastructure, and regulatory frameworks. AWT's crews possess deep knowledge of Coast Guard regulations and remain constantly aware of wind forecasts, tides, and weather patterns along the East Coast. This local expertise minimizes downtime, enhances efficiency, and sustains a culture of safety on every voyage.

Safety builds trust

In offshore wind, compliance is more than a requirement; it is a shared value. AWT's proactive safety culture has become a defining strength, earning repeat business and long-term partnerships with clients who prioritize professionalism above all else.

'We look at every day as a learning day, as no two days are the same offshore,' says Donadio. 'Every trip allows us to improve the systems we've built and to reinforce that safety always comes first.'

AWT was the first operator in the United States to meet the highest safety and inspection standards for its CTV fleet. Each vessel undergoes multiple annual inspections by the US Coast Guard and IMCA eCMID

auditors and maintains ISO 9001, 14001, and 45001 certifications, along with full compliance under the International Safety Management (ISM) Code certified by DNV.

Local content and crew development

The operator's commitment to local content directly supports both developers and state initiatives to build a self-sustaining offshore wind supply chain. By hiring and training local mariners and engaging regional vendors, AWT ensures that the economic benefits of

offshore wind stay within the communities it serves, strengthening both its operations and the surrounding maritime industry.

All crews are full-time, year-round employees who take personal pride in their vessels and the projects they support.

The quiet force behind the turbines

Offshore wind is often measured in gigawatts and megawatts, but its real strength lies in people: captains who read the weather by instinct, deckhands balancing on a moving deck, and technicians who trust the vessel that carries them to and from work each day. For Donadio, this human dimension makes the mission deeply personal.

He is known for a hands-on leadership style, walking the docks, speaking directly with crew, and staying closely involved in operations. His approach blends traditional seamanship with forward-thinking management, earning respect from mariners who value leaders forged through real experience on the water.

Today, AWT stands as more than a maritime operator. It has become a cornerstone of America's offshore wind future. From launching Rhode Island's first high-speed ferry to building the nation's first US-built CTV, the operator's journey reflects the essence of American maritime spirit: entrepreneurship, determination, and innovation powering the nation's clean energy future, one safe voyage at a time.

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