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Offshore wind turbine research on horizon

Meteorological towers next step

BY **TODD B. BATES** • ENVIRONMENTAL WRITER • APRIL 18, 2008

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The federal government could award leases this fall to three companies seeking to erect meteorological towers off the Jersey Shore to collect data in advance of potential wind turbine projects, officials said Thursday.

One of the six potential lease areas, each of which would cover nine square miles of ocean bottom, would be about 18 miles east of Long Beach Island, according to federal Minerals Management Service officials. The rest would be off Atlantic and Cape May counties.

The oceans have "an absolutely great potential for providing us energy," MMS director Randall Luthi said in a conference call with reporters.

But Tim Dillingham, executive director of the American Littoral Society, a Sandy Hook-based coastal conservation group that's

against putting wind turbines offshore, said "we seem to be rushing into this without answering any of the questions about conflict with other uses of the ocean or harm to the natural resources that are out there."

News of the potential leases arrived as New Jersey released a draft energy master plan that projected the need for at least 1,000 megawatts of electricity from wind energy off the coast.

Hundreds of wind turbines may be needed.

The meteorological towers would be located in a New Jersey environmental study area for a potential wind turbine project, according to Maureen Bornholdt, who manages the MMS alternative energy program.

That area is up to 20 nautical miles, or 23 regular miles, offshore — from Seaside Park to Stone Harbor.

Each of the potential lease areas would have at least one meteorological tower for collecting weather and other environmental information, Bornholdt said.

5 firms vie for BPU grant

Garden State Offshore Energy, a joint venture of PSEG Renewable Generation and Winergy Power Holdings, wants to lease two areas off Ocean and Atlantic counties, said Paul Rosengren, a PSEG spokesman. He declined to give their locations.

Fishermen's Energy of New Jersey in Lower Township wants to lease one area seven miles off Atlantic City, said Rhonda Jackson, company spokeswoman.

Bluewater Wind of Hoboken also has applied for a lease, according to an e-mail from Jim Lanard, head of strategic planning.

That potential lease area is in the area where the company would propose building a wind turbine park about 16 miles southeast of Atlantic City, according to the e-mail.

The companies are among the five vying for up to \$19 million from the state Board of Public Utilities for a potential offshore wind turbine project, according to BPU officials.

The project would probably have about 70 turbines and generate electricity for about 125,000 homes, according to a BPU e-mail from last year.

A state blue ribbon panel has recommended that New Jersey facilitate a pilot project, which would generate up to 350 megawatts of clean, renewable energy.

The state planned to spend \$4.5 million on environmental studies.

Luthi said the MMS hopes that leases will be granted this fall and tower construction would be completed by the end of next year.

The leases would last for five years and cost \$3 an acre per year, Bornholdt said.

Sierra Club supportive

Jeff Tittel, director of the Sierra Club's New Jersey chapter, said the group supports tapping offshore



A windmill and wind turbines in Zoeterwoude, the Netherlands, where opposition to the electricity-generating turbines has resulted in moving them offshore, out of sight. (AP FILE PHOTO)

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wind "but we just want to make sure it's done right."

"I'd like to see us figure out where the best places (are) and do our planning ahead of time versus after the fact," he said.

Bornholdt said the MMS can regulate the projects through leases, and lessees will have to adhere to numerous federal laws.

Meanwhile, the MMS wants to finalize a proposed alternative energy rule by year's end, said Luthi, MMS director.

"The truth is the United States needs energy," Luthi said.

"I think that we can do it safely," he said. "I know we can do it well. It's going to take some effort. It's going to take people working cooperatively together."

Todd B. Bates: (732) 643-4237 or tbates@app.com. This story includes material from Asbury Park Press archives.

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why is there never a mention of tidal power.the rest of the world is up and running on tidal generated power.we are the only country that dosent have a tidal generating station. any number of countries can tell us what they the exact cost of instalation was and exactly how much energy it produces. we allready have wind farms in the u.s.a. they are producing energy as we speak.so we realy dont need a 4.5 million dollar feaserbility study. tides rise and fall 4

times a day,365 days a year.so lets stop the bull we know what the towers will cost .and how much power they will produce. the tidal floats we can ask the governments that have them. again no fesability studies no engineering studies etc. like nike says <<<< just do it >>>> ed time 4 tides

4/21/2008 11:26:07 PM

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blademan wrote:

It has to be some kind of ultimate irony that environmentalist would fight the construction of even a windmill. It is a good thing that the environmental movement didn't get on its feet until about 20 years ago, NOTHING would have ever gotten built in this country.

4/18/2008 10:57:14 PM

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Stopthecar wrote:

Does anyone know how many windmills it would take to replace an average nuclear power plant? Just wondering.

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RAM54 wrote:

Looks like Tim Dillingham, executive director of the American Littoral Society is first in line to shake down three companies seeking to erect meteorological towers for some research money Seems he s very concerned about the natural resources that are out there ! I m sure they ll be many more coming before this project gets any traction.

4/18/2008 12:47:36 PM

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OU812 wrote:

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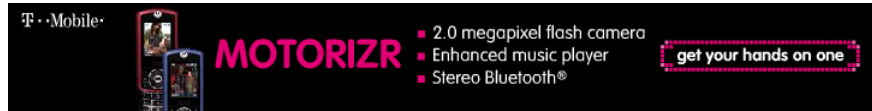
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