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news

New Jersey's Corzine Seeks Wind Farm Off East Coast (Update 1)

By Terrence Dopp

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May 9 (Bloomberg) -- New Jersey Governor [Jon Corzine](#) wants his state to be the first in the U.S. Northeast to build an electricity-generating wind farm off the Atlantic coast.

Five companies are vying for \$19 million in grants and the right to put as many as 200 windmills within 20 miles (32 kilometers) of the Jersey Shore. The state plans to select a winner in August, said [Lance Miller](#), chief

of policy and planning for the [Board of Public Utilities](#).

Offshore wind would help Corzine fulfill a plan for how the state should receive and use its energy. A draft of the [proposal](#), released last month, calls for the state to get almost a quarter of its power from so-called renewable sources such as solar panels by 2020, including 1,000 megawatts of offshore wind.

"There's a clear need to produce as much carbon-free energy as possible. If we're successful, this is going to be replicated" elsewhere, Corzine said during an interview in his Statehouse office. "We have a real need that's driving our interests."

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The U.S. wind energy industry installed more than 5,000 megawatts in 2007, increasing its total generating capacity by 45 percent to more than 16,800 megawatts, according to the American Wind Energy Association. Texas has the most wind power capacity, followed by California and Minnesota.

More densely populated areas don't have the land to build large wind farms and are looking off coast. The U.S. has no operating offshore wind farms. New Jersey, New York, Delaware and Massachusetts are among Northeast states considering projects.

Economic, Environmental Impact

Corzine, a first-term Democrat, says the state will balance the desire to move ahead on a timely basis, with the need for "thoughtful" economic and environmental studies. The state will try to avoid negative impacts on Jersey Shore tourism and fishing and will seek to ensure property values remain unharmed by the project, he said.

"This is going to be on balance positive for the environment," Corzine, 61, said. "A lot of people are trying to do what I would say are back-of-the-envelope analyses, but we're trying to do something that is more in-depth."

A plan to build a wind farm off the coast of New York's Long Island was scrapped last year because of its cost. In Massachusetts, a proposal to put wind

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turbines off the shores of Cape Cod has met with opposition from residents who say it will ruin their views.

The Massachusetts plan to build 130 wind turbines, each 440 feet high, would also threaten the habitat of the area's endangered terns and right whales, said Glenn Wattlely, head of the Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound.

"There is this euphoria around wind and solar power. It's all good, but some of these offshore wind projects have a lot more issues than people let on," Wattlely said.

'Tremendous Potential'

New Jersey, the most densely populated U.S. state, has installed 11 onshore wind turbines since 2001, including a facility in Atlantic City. Offshore wind energy "offers tremendous potential, while onshore wind energy resources appear to be limited," the state said in its draft energy master plan.

State energy regulators last year [solicited](#) offers from companies to develop offshore wind with a capacity of 350 megawatts, enough to power 110,000 homes, Miller said.

The companies that submitted proposals are the renewable generation division of [Public Service Enterprise Group Inc.](#), owner of the state's largest utility, and partner Winergy Power Holdings LLC; Environmental Technologies LLC; Occidental Development & Equities LLC; [Babcock & Brown](#) Ltd.'s Bluewater Wind and [Fishermen's Energy of New Jersey LLC](#).

"We want to guide this process," said Rhonda Jackson, director of research and communications for [Fishermen's Energy](#), a Cape May-based group of commercial fishermen. "People realize what is happening in the world and the timing is right for this. We really have to reduce our dependence on foreign oil."

State Help

The subsidies and promise of state help in overcoming public opposition make New Jersey more attractive as a potential place to build a wind power facility, said [Anne Hoskins](#), Public Service president of federal affairs and policy. The company's proposal calls for placing 96 turbines 16 miles offshore.





"There's really not a lot of land to put wind turbines on" in New Jersey, Hoskins said. "As we've seen in other states, there has been some opposition to wind, and it takes a lot of resources to overcome that."


[Jeff Tittel](#), director of the state chapter of the environmental group Sierra Club, said wind is a plentiful source of renewable energy as the state and nation look to curb greenhouse gas emissions. He said the turbines have advanced since early days, when migratory birds were killed by rotors, and finding a way to build the offshore facilities is necessary to reduce the demand for fossil fuel-burning power plants.

"The answer is going to be a series of cheaper and safer alternatives," Tittel said. "The way we're going to meet our energy demand over the next 20 years is through a mix."

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