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Fishery group bids for wind farm

BY WILLIAM H. SOKOLIC • COURIER-POST STAFF • OCTOBER 3, 2008

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A consortium of South Jersey commercial fisheries hope to win a contract today from the Board of Public Utilities to construct the first wind farm off the coast of New Jersey.

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If successful, Fishermen's Energy of New Jersey expects to build a two-phase project, one in state waters, the other in federal seas.

FERN is one of five companies which submitted proposals for a pilot program to provide up to 350 megawatts of offshore renewable wind electricity. Another proposal was submitted by Garden State Offshore Energy, a partnership between a company called Deepwater Wind and Public Service Electric & Gas.

The first phase of the FERN proposal consists of eight 2 1/2-megawatt turbines some two miles east of Atlantic City costing \$100 million, with the electricity earmarked for rural customers. The second phase will include 66, five-megawatt

turbines in federal waters, six to 10 miles east-southeast of Atlantic City at a cost of \$1.5 billion.

Power generated would be sold to variety of customers.

"We applied for state permits already," said FERN president Daniel Cohen, who owns Atlantic Capes Fisheries, based just outside Cape May. The turbines could be operational by 2011, maybe earlier.

PSE&G has proposed 96 turbines sitting 16 miles off shore, creating 350 megawatts of electricity.

The company will rely on adapting the technology used to construct oil rigs for wind turbines, allowing the devices to go deeper under the sea bed and as far as 30 miles from shore, said PSE&G spokesman, Paul Rosengren.

"Half will be operational by 2012 and half in 2013," he said.

PSE&G says their proposal offers other advantages based on the distance from the coastline.

"It takes the vista out of the equation and limits the impact on migratory birds and aquatic life," Rosengren said.

Cohen says FERN's entry evolved after years of opposition from the commercial fishing industry to wind farms and their potential impact on fishing grounds.

"The initial reaction was that it would reduce the availability of fish," he said.

However, the inevitability of such energy, coupled with the high cost of fuel to run boats and the growing menace of global warming, prompted not only a change of heart, but a decision to seek control of the wind farms.



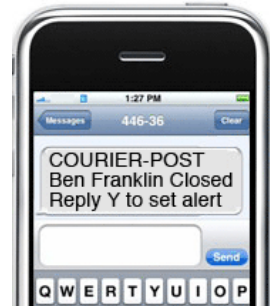
Photo illustration provided

An illustration shows the expected look of offshore power turbines proposed for six miles or more beyond Atlantic City.

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"The conclusion was that an offshore energy solution would happen whether we opposed it or not, and we'd rather be agents of change (rather than) victims of change," Cohen said.

Said Rhonda Jackson, director of communications for FERN, "The fishing industry is dwindling, and changing. Permits are fewer with fewer days when they're allowed to fish. It's harder to make a living."

To those who say the fishermen have no track record, Cohen points out that none of the companies have expertise in wind farms.

"We shouldn't lose because people think we're just fisherman," he said.

FERN consists of existing businesses familiar with the vagaries of the sea. The company also hired a British firm with experience designing wind farms off the coast of England, the 12th largest such company in the world.

England expects to have 7,000 turbines in operation by 2020, producing 40 percent of the country's electricity, more than twice the output anticipated in New Jersey.

If selected, FERN will supply a 340-foot construction vessel to reside at one of New Jersey's deep water ports, with the preference being the South Jersey Port Corporation in Camden. The ship will ferry the turbines out to sea.

The first phase will rely on a European company to manufacture the turbines as they're not made domestically yet, Cohen said. By the second phase, he expects one of the overseas firms to establish a plant in the U.S., again, in New Jersey.

While Deepwater Wind agreed to [house](#) manufacturing facilities in Rhode Island when that state awarded a wind farm contract last week, Rosengren said the partnership would build the actual turbines in New Jersey and the vessel would use the port in Bayonne or Camden as a dock to transport the finished product.

The evaluation committee from the state Board of Public Utilities can either make a recommendation on a proposed winner -- even more than one -- or make no award if an acceptable proposal is not received, according to spokesman Doyal H. Siddell.

Even if a selection is made, construction will only occur if the necessary state and federal permits are obtained. Expansion of the wind farms won't proceed until the Department of Environmental Protection determines there were no unacceptable adverse impacts on the environment, the economy or tourism.

Reach William H. Sokolic at (609) 823-9159 or bsokolic@camden.gannett.com

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Not only are these wind ideas sound, the best part is the natural competition to get this done. That is good to see. That will keep their estimates closer to the truth, and ultimately make the product (energy) cheaper for consumers.

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Thewhaleman wrote:

it would be a whole lot easier and cheaper to retrofit every house in new jersey with Solar Hot water. This would cut consumption of fuel by half and bring jobs here. Solar hot water heaters work even in winter. They will raise the water temperature to over 100 degrees. This water can be used for showers and heating. How does this help? It helps because the vast majority of fuel is spent raising water temps from 55 to 70 degrees. After that its gets cheaper and cheaper to heat up. at over 100 degrees the price drops in half. I guess trenton hasn't been bribed by the solar people yet.

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GCOM2 wrote:

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OK, now we're talkin. Let's build those windmills as fast as we can.

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