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Coastal wind farm project means jobs, investor tells fishermen

By RICHARD DEGENER Staff Writer, 609-463-6711

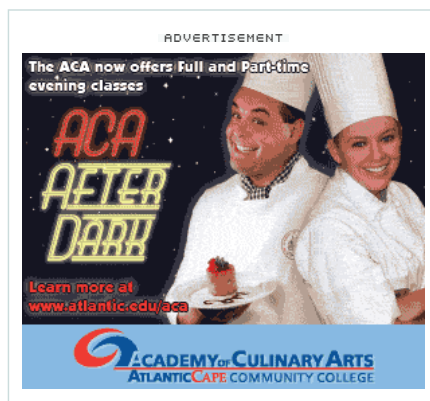
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ATLANTIC CITY - Michael Mohr isn't ready to give up captaining a surf clam boat just yet, but he sure likes a proposal by a group of New Jersey fishermen to build a wind farm off this casino resort. Mohr, sitting in the wheelhouse of the Lady Brittany at Barney's Dock on Saturday, pondered the possibilities.

"I think a lot of us are interested in it. It's a thing of the future. It's a must," Mohr said.

Dan Cohen, the president of Fishermen's Energy of New Jersey, or FERN, and owner of Atlantic Capes Fisheries in the Port of Cape May, visited Barney's Dock on Saturday to talk up the proposal.

Cohen said it includes jobs for fishermen, although they may have to go to school and learn more about wind energy. He hopes the industry spawns such courses at schools such as Atlantic Cape Community College.



Cohen said the wind farm also would revitalize the port of Camden, since Cohen said its deep water is needed for the 340-foot vessel that will be used to build the offshore wind turbines that will cost about \$1.3 billion. Locals fish docks would be used for the smaller vessels and crews that go out to maintain the turbines.

With the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities set next week to pick a company to do the first pilot wind project, Cohen is championing his firm as the most local. He said his two major competitors among the five firms that made proposals to the BPU already have announced plans to be based in other states: Rhode Island and Delaware.

"We're the only one offering local jobs. We're the only one committed to home-porting vessels here. We're offering renewable energy and green-collar jobs, 800 jobs in New Jersey, that will hopefully spawn an entire industry in New Jersey," Cohen said.

FERN investors include Barney and Martin Truex, who own the dock on Rhode Island Avenue where the Lady Brittany is based. The Truexes supply most of the world's clams for soups and chowders. They join a large group that includes Port of Cape May dock owners Keith Laudeman of Cold Spring Fish & Supply and Jeff Reichle of Lund's Fisheries, as well as Rick Hoff, owner of Dock Street Seafood in Wildwood, the Larson family in Barnegat Light, John Kelleher of Point Pleasant and Warren Alexander of Atlantic Shellfish. It could be much more than an investment for many used to making their living in an industry rocked by high fuel prices and cutbacks in harvest levels. Offshore wind represents work.

"We'll produce the energy in New Jersey and the jobs on the docks like this," Cohen said. "Employees will be the fishermen. We're capped on what we're allowed to harvest and a lot of fishermen are underemployed."

Fishermen initially were skeptical and opposed offshore windmills. They saw them taking away fishing grounds. Cohen convinced them to "be agents of change" instead of victims of a new industry that suddenly makes sense with oil selling for more than \$100 per barrel and climate change threatening to swamp the coasts with higher oceans.

Many initially opposed offshore turbines for aesthetic reasons. Paul Gallagher, the attorney for FERN and vice president of the Atlantic County Utilities Authority, said people initially opposed the five turbines spinning at his utility. Gallagher said 6,000 people have come to see the turbines, and people staying at Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa request windows facing them. Barnegat Light Mayor Kirk Larson, a FERN investor, said offshore turbines are coming one way or another.

"People on the waterfronts will have to get used to it," Larson said.

FERN is proposing an initial phase of eight turbines 3 miles out. They would cost \$100 million, produce 20 megawatts and be on line in 2010. Cohen said the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Utilities Service is offering financing if the energy goes to rural electric customers.

"It would be the first rural electric cooperative in New Jersey since 1937," Cohen said.

The second phase would be six to seven miles out, cost more than \$1 billion and use 66 turbines to generate 330 megawatts. By comparison, the B.L. England plant in Upper Township, which runs on coal and oil, can produce 447 megawatts.

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