

## Groups bidding to build offshore windmills address public concerns

*August 1, 2008 by Ben Leach in Press of Atlantic City*

With the state's Board of Public Utilities holding off a decision on awarding an offshore windmill license early yesterday, three of the candidates for the project gathered to discuss how they would each approach the windmill project and address the public's concerns.

The Wetlands Institute hosted a wind-power forum Thursday night, with much of the discussion focused on proposed offshore windmills that would appear anywhere from three to 20 miles off the coast of Atlantic and Cape May counties.

While the public is familiar with the wind farm at the Atlantic County Utilities Authority, the representatives had to explain some of the challenges that offshore windmills pose developers, such as building larger towers in deeper water, accounting for birds and marine species, and harnessing the wind that is much more powerful offshore than on land.

An estimated 20,000 megawatts of energy could lie offshore with wind power, which could put New Jersey very close toward reaching its goal of reduced carbon dependency by 2020.

"Only solar and off-shore wind are sufficient to meet this requirement," said Ken Strait, manager of biological programs in Environment, Health, and Safety at Public Service Enterprise Group.

One of the key differences among the plans as presented at the forum was the number of windmills to be built. For example, Bluewater Wind wants to build as many as 116 wind turbines, each with three megawatts of capacity.

But Fisherman's Energy believes that the initial project should only include eight windmills, while a second phase would add another 66 that generate five megawatts each.

"We believe the correct solution is building a pilot wind farm as quickly as possible so that we can get results as quickly as possible," said Dan Cohen, president of Fisherman's Energy.

Images were prepared for the presentation that showed how the windmills would look depending on how far off the coast they were built. At 15 to 20 miles offshore, they were barely visible.

The other two firms that have applied for the project, Bayonne's Occidental Development and Equities, LLC, and New York City's Environmental Technologies LLC, were not present. The BPU is not making a decision until at least October.

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