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## Catching the Wind

*Some commercial fisheries are bucking their industry with plans for their own wind farm off New Jersey*

By YULIYA CHERNOVA

Instead of fighting offshore-wind power like most of their peers, some East Coast commercial fisheries are trying a different tack: They're angling for a piece of the action.

The company they formed, incorporated as Fishermen's Energy LLC in 2007, moved a step closer to that goal in October when it won a \$4 million grant from the state of New Jersey to begin the initial stages of development on a proposed 350-megawatt wind farm off Atlantic City. The group is betting that with fishermen as principal developers, a key opposition to offshore-wind projects will be removed.

Fishing companies traditionally have resisted offshore-wind development out of fear that large industrial structures on the water might interfere with their routes and equipment. Daniel Cohen, the owner of Atlantic Capes Fisheries Inc. in Cape May, N.J., and the president of Fishermen's Energy, says his group chose a different path after concluding that offshore-wind development was more than just a fad.

### *Getting Ahead of the Trend*

"We realized that society felt strongly about the benefits of offshore wind and that it will be built despite our opposition, and we would be the victims of that change," says the 54-year-old Mr. Cohen, who co-founded Fishermen's Energy along with Andrew Gould, 55, president of merchant and investment bank Arthur P. Gould & Co., which is based in Great Neck, N.Y., and provides funding to the fishing industry.

The group initially lost its bid for the New Jersey grant to rival developer Garden State Offshore Energy, which is seeking to build a 350-megawatt wind farm about 16 miles off the coast of South Jersey. Garden State Offshore is a joint venture of Deepwater Wind of Hoboken, N.J., and [Public Service Enterprise Group Inc.](#), an electric utility based in Newark, N.J. "Fishermen's is not going to score as [high as] somebody that has PSEG Enterprises sitting there, that develops energy projects all over the world," says Lance Miller, chief of policy and planning at the state board of public utilities.

But a decision by Gov. Jon Corzine to triple New Jersey's offshore-wind goal to 3,000 megawatts—about 13% of the state's total electricity—by 2020 resulted in Fishermen's Energy and another developer, Bluewater Wind LLC, winning their own \$4 million grants for separate 350-megawatt offshore projects, each capable of powering about 90,000 homes annually.

### *Strong Headwinds*

The U.S. Department of Energy has said that because the U.S. has long coastlines with strong winds and coastal cities

with large electricity needs, offshore-wind power could play a huge role in helping the U.S. meet its renewable-energy goals. In a May 2008 report on how the U.S. could achieve 20% of its electricity generation from wind by 2030, the department identified 54 gigawatts as coming from offshore installations.

While there are already more than 33 offshore-wind projects producing electricity in Europe, there are none in U.S. waters. States with offshore-wind plans in the works include New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Delaware, but developers in some of those states have run into opposition from groups that say wind farms pose a threat to birds and fish and to homeowners' ocean views.

A proposed wind farm off Cape Cod, Mass., for example, has been mired in legal fights for years, while in New York, commercial fishermen launched protests in 2006 when Long Island Power Authority, a nonprofit municipal electric utility, wanted to build an offshore-wind farm near Jones Beach.

"They were going to privatize a section of the ocean that was premier fishing grounds," says Bonnie Brady, chairwoman of the Long Island Commercial Fishing Association.

Critics within the fishing industry say offshore-wind projects could interfere with the routes of fishing boats that follow migratory species. These boats tug mobile gear such as dredges and nets along the ocean bottom to capture things like surf clams, sea scallops, quahogs, mackerel, herring and squid.

Offshore-wind development also could affect aquatic life by interfering with fish migration, altering the quality of water and sediment, and generating noise and vibrations, according to a 2004 report by the Ospar Commission, an organization formed by European governments to protect the marine environment of the Northeast Atlantic. It's possible, however, that wind-farm structures might actually help fish proliferate by protecting them against predators and fisheries, said the report, which pointed out that more scientific information is needed to draw a conclusion.

### *Scaling Up*

Although Long Island Power Authority eventually canceled the Jones Beach project, Kevin Law, the president of LIPA, says the decision was not a result of the fishermen's concerns. Rather, he says, the project was shelved because it was "too close to the shore and too small, which made it too expensive," he says.

The utility is now collaborating with [Consolidated Edison Inc.](#) of New York on a proposal to build a wind farm much farther offshore—about 13 miles off the Rockaway Peninsula. Mr. Law says LIPA will examine the fishing industry's concerns as part of an environmental-assessment statement it is required to complete as part of the permitting process.

"One thing we have to make sure is that in the effort to create green-collar jobs we don't displace the fishing industry," Mr. Law says.

Ms. Brady says her association needs more details about the proposed project before saying whether it will fight it.

"It's not that fisheries are inherently against these projects," she says. "Just prove that you are not polluting and not putting the turbines into productive fishing grounds."

### *Neutralizing the Opposition*

Fishermen's Energy, meanwhile, believes that by having the fishermen on its side, it can avoid a protracted battle to win a construction permit for its proposed wind farm off the Jersey coast.

"It's a fact we haven't heard opposition from fishery interests thus far," says Mr. Miller of the state utilities commission.

Currently staffed with about 20 people and a team of consultants, Fishermen's Energy is preparing to build a meteorological tower to measure wind resources and collect other data it will need to begin construction of the wind farm. As part of that process, it is turning an ordinary fishing boat, 128 long by 28 feet wide, into a geotechnical vessel capable of extracting core samples from the ocean floor that will be analyzed and used by engineers designing the foundation of the wind towers.

Eventually, the company plans to install between 70 and 96 wind turbines in the ocean off Atlantic City. "Depending on permitting, we expect construction to commence in about 2012," says Mr. Gould. The project ultimately may cost more than \$1 billion, according to the company.

In addition to funding, the companies connected to Fishermen's Energy plan to contribute equipment and manpower to the offshore-wind effort. Together, their sales exceed \$400 million annually, they own more than 100 fishing vessels and they oversee servicing, docking, repairing, processing, and marketing operations at facilities in Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Maryland and Virginia.

### *At Home on the Water*

The group plans to avail itself of docks that belong to its constituent fishing companies. It also plans to employ fishermen who are knowledgeable about handling vessels in harsh deep-water conditions.

"One of the limitations in Europe [for offshore-wind development] was that they needed to attract employees that were comfortable working offshore," says Mr. Cohen, who bought his first fishing boat in 1978, four years after the death of his father, who was the first in the family to start a commercial-fishing business.

In the meantime, Fishermen's Energy is exploring several sites for a potential shipyard that could service both fishing and offshore-wind vessels. In addition to the geotechnical vessel, which Fishermen's intends to offer to other offshore-wind developers, the company will need ships with lifts to jack up heavy turbines and carry other construction materials. It plans to retrofit fishing vessels for some of these tasks.

### *Reaching Out*

Mr. Cohen, who now spends most of his time at Fishermen's Energy, declined to say how much funding the group currently has. Like other independent power producers, Fishermen's Energy says it expects outside investors to provide some of the financing for its project.

"Fishermen's expects to retain significant ownership in each of its projects," says Mr. Gould. It also plans to "play a direct and active role in managing, operating and maintaining each of its projects, and in arranging the sales of the power that each project produces," he says.

The company wants to develop projects outside New Jersey, and it is reaching out to fisheries along the entire East Coast in an attempt to involve more of them in the effort.

"We plan to expand ownership of Fishermen's Energy and invite investment by commercial fishermen, fishing companies, and allied marine industries from Maine to South Carolina," says Mr. Gould.

Mr. Cohen says it would be very difficult for any offshore-wind project not to affect local fisheries, but the effects can be mitigated by installing larger turbines and concentrating the area of the project. His group plans to offer fishermen a role in the development or servicing of wind projects, as well as retraining. In the future, if "we end up siting wind farms where people lose the ability to fish, we will mitigate that through compensation," he says.