

pressofAtlanticCity.com

Ocean County firm hopes to construct 106 wind turbines in Delaware Bay

By **DANIEL WALSH** Staff Writer, 856-649-2074 | Posted: Monday, August 24, 2009

Imagine more than 100 wind turbines dotting the Delaware Bay. Each reaches more than 400 feet into the sky, spinning slowly in the wind as they harness it to power more than 125,000 homes.

Sound far-fetched?

Delsea Energy wants to raise 106 wind turbines on the bay to produce about 381.6 megawatts of energy. John Renz, Delsea's vice president of business development, said the company chose the Delaware Bay because it has the right qualities to make wind production feasible.

The Delaware Bay plan is one of the first two wind projects proposed by Delsea, a relatively new firm from Toms River comprised largely of building contractors and engineers. Delsea this year also proposed building another wind park in the Pocono Mountains on land owned by the city of Bethlehem, Pa. The company has eight employees, Renz said.

Delsea Energy's plan calls for constructing and spanning turbines across 42 square miles in the northwestern Delaware Bay. Turbines would be raised at least one mile off Cumberland County's shore and 2,000 feet from the bay's shipping channel.

"It has a good wind source," said Renz, who lives in Atlantic County. "It's shallow. It's constructible."

Delsea has applied for a state waterfront development permit in order to raise several meteorological towers that would measure wind power, and state officials are still reviewing the application, Department of Environmental Protection spokeswoman Karen Hershey said. That preliminary step comes before seeking approval for the wind turbines themselves.

The firm has brought on former DEP Commissioner Bradley Campbell to represent the firm in its DEP application process. Renz said Delsea does not need a wind power lease from the U.S. Department of Interior because its operations will focus on New Jersey waters.

Should Delsea gain approval for four monitoring stations and eventually the wind turbines, it would be the first firm to raise a wind farm in the Delaware Bay.

It also could be the only one. When New Jersey's blue-ribbon panel examined off-shore wind energy prospects, members raised concerns about development in the lower Delaware Bay, along Cape May County's western coast.

"We have concerns about wind turbines in the lower Cape May and Delaware Bay area because of critical environmental habitat," Hershey said.

Delsea chose to raise turbines in the northern bay to avoid those areas of environmental concerns, Renz said.

Campbell's role, however, has not alleviated concerns of conservationists and fishermen.

Steve Fleetwood, who runs Bivalve Packing in Port Norris, Commercial Township, said he's a big fan of wind energy, but not in the heart of the Delaware Bay fishery.

"That's the prime area where we work, right in that area we're talking about," Fleetwood said. "That's where all the most productive seedbeds are. Ever since I heard about it, I thought, 'That'll be stopped immediately.'"

Jane Galletto, head of Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and Its Tributaries, thought much the same. She said Delsea should have a difficult time getting required coastal permits from the state because state law restricts such development in state waters.

Galletto and other conservationists are concerned the windmills would affect migratory birds heading to the Delaware Bayshore's wetlands, a key stopover point.

"Given that the bay is such a globally important place for birds, this really isn't an appropriate place for large-scale wind power development," said Tim Dillingham, a member of the state's blueribbon panel on wind power and executive director of the American Littoral Society.

Eric Stiles, of the New Jersey Audubon Society, agreed.

"I think it's about obvious," Stiles said. "You don't want to put strip malls on the Serengeti, and you don't want to put turbines in the Delaware Bay, for basically the same eco-regional significance reason. Regardless of whether it's renewable (energy), it's just a bad place for the infrastructure."

New Jersey's Energy Master Plan calls for wind power to produce 1,000 megawatts of electricity by 2013.

So far, most wind power development near New Jersey has been focused on the Atlantic Ocean. In June, the U.S. Department of Interior awarded five offshore wind energy leases to three companies, all focused more than six miles off the Atlantic coast. Those wind farms would each produce about 350 megawatts of energy, a little less than Delsea's plan.

If Delsea does obtain a permit to raise its meteorological monitoring stations in the Delaware Bay, Renz expects Delsea would collect about two years' worth of data. After that, Delsea could raise the turbines, which would reach more than 400 feet above the water's surface and measure about 30 feet around, according to Renz. All told, it could be five years before a wind turbine goes up, Renz said.

E-mail Daniel Walsh:

DWalsh@pressofac.com

Posted in [Cumberland](#), [Ocean](#) on *Monday, August 24, 2009 5:45 pm* *Updated: 12:50 pm.*