

Wind-power project off Delaware coast on PSC agenda

By JEFF MONTGOMERY, The News Journal

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A company that hopes to build power-generating wind turbines off Delaware's coast will brief state Public Service Commission members on the topic Tuesday.

The proposal comes as the state's largest power delivery company, Delmarva Power, scrambles to line up new long-term supplies.

State environmental officials said that New York-based Bluewater Wind LLC has approached them to discuss general terms for an offshore wind project. The company also has said that it plans to submit a supply proposal to Delmarva under a PSC-supervised bidding process.

State lawmakers approved a bill this year requiring Delmarva to secure supply bids this year, including requirements to consider new in-state generating sites and electricity produced from renewable fuels or technologies.

"They've discussed the matter with a couple of our staff people," said John A. Hughes, secretary of Delaware's Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control. "I've got a lot of questions. I'm fully aware of the advantages of wind power. Conceptually, it's just wonderful, but every place I've seen it's been an extremely controversial matter."

Rob Propes, Delaware project director for Bluewater Wind, said the company plans only an educational discussion today.

"We're very serious about what we're doing and what we're evaluating," Propes said. "We're not here just to tantalize people with a concept."

Bluewater is a wholly owned subsidiary of Arcadia Wind Power Holdings LLC, a company involved in an operational wind-farm in Montana. The same company, which has offices in New York, New Jersey, and Rhode Island, proposed an off-shore wind project in 2004 to serve the Long Island Power Authority, but was outbid by FPL Energy.

Bruce Burcat, the PSC's executive director, said that Bluewater Wind's presentation would be timely, but general.

"They're interested in potentially doing a project in the state," Burcat said. "We felt it was proper for the commissioners to get some kind of presentation. From what I understand, it's going to be a relatively brief overview of wind power, its benefits and some information about the company itself."

Propes said that the company would only propose turbines at least 6 nautical miles, or 6.6 highway miles, offshore. At that distance, turbines would barely poke above the horizon in clear weather, according to the company's Web site.

Hughes said that officials would be interested in tower height, blade-tip clearance and stability in ocean waters.

"That's one expensive place to build, I do know that," Hughes said. "I know that this is a competent company. Some folks with wind power and tidal power ideas are people with a brainstorm and a briefcase. These folks have the ability to actually make wind power work."

Delmarva's proposal calls for new generating capacity of not more than 200 megawatts, to be on line by 2013, with not less than 50 megawatts from non-renewable sources and not less than 25 megawatts from renewable supplies.

In 2002, a New York-based company briefed the Army Corps of Engineers on a proposal to build hundreds of offshore turbines near New York, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland, among other locations. Agency officials said they have not received any applications for those sites, however. Contact Jeff Montgomery at 678-4277 or jmontgomery@delawareonline.com

IF YOU GO The Public Service Commission is scheduled to meet at 1 p.m. Tuesday at 861 Silver Lake Blvd., Dover, in the Cannon Building hearing room.