



New Jersey's Energy Future: IS THE ANSWER BLOWING IN THE WIND?

BY JON S. POLEVOY

The idea of wind farms – large plots of turbines – sprouting out of fields in New Jersey and generating energy to help reduce the need for fossil fuel is a good concept. But it's also one that requires time. Stringent regulations and the prospect of public protests make building these projects challenging.



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With that in mind, planners of wind power projects, both large and small, need to allow for plenty of time for permitting and waging public relations campaigns.

The obstacles faced by planners include financing and permitting for construction. While each wind turbine has a relatively small footprint, a wind farm, because of spacing between turbines, requires a large footprint. Further, there is the placement of power lines to connect to the power grid. And then there's the potential for protests. With wind turbines typically ranging in height from 100 feet to 400 feet, objections from residents related to view obstructions and noise should be expected. Concerns regarding the impact of the projects on threatened and endangered species have

also been raised. Further, the return on investment on some wind projects may change due to fluctuations in the value of credits and incentives for wind generated power.

This doesn't mean wind farms are doomed. New Jersey's Atlantic County is already home to the first coastal wind farm in the country, and plans are being made to put wind turbines in ocean waters off the New Jersey coastline. New Jersey municipalities also are planning to invest in wind power. Last summer, Ocean Gate became the first municipality in New Jersey to construct a wind turbine. Other municipalities are likely to follow.

Because of the challenges, however, large scale wind projects will likely be built far offshore in federal ocean waters, bringing those projects under both federal and state regulatory jurisdiction and increasing the costs for connecting to the power grid.

There is good news. New Jersey has taken a leading role toward promoting renewable energy sources. The Garden State's energy master plan seeks to promote the generation of at least 30 per-

Photo courtesy of M.A. Mortenson Company

Atlantic City's Wind Farm

Tourists heading to New Jersey's gambling Mecca get a good look at the Jersey Atlantic Wind farm – see photo at left – a massive example of how wind can be turned into energy. **Some facts:**

- **Project:** Five 380-foot tall turbines.
- **Location:** Atlantic County Utilities Authority Wastewater Treatment Facility, Atlantic City.
- **Opened:** December 2005.
- **Owners:** Jersey-Atlantic Wind, LLC, a partner with original developer Community Energy, Inc.

- **Cost:** \$12.5 million. Community Energy received a \$1.7 million grant from the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, and a \$1.9 million customer-supply grant through Atlantic City Electric. The remaining costs were funded by private party equity or debt financing.
- **Major advantage:** Power from the turbines connects to an existing substation located nearby. There was no need to construct additional transmission facilities to convey the power to ACUA or other end-users.

- **Production:** Each turbine is capable of producing enough energy to power approximately 2,500 homes each year. It is estimated the wind farm generates the energy equivalent of 11,964 barrels of crude oil per year.
- **Usage:** The energy is used to operate the ACUA wastewater treatment plant, with any excess energy provided to the main power grid.
- **Savings:** The wind farm has saved the ACUA approximately \$2 million in its first four years of operation.

cent of the state's electricity through renewable sources by the year 2020, including offshore wind power. The state Legislature recently passed two bills aimed at promoting the development of wind energy systems by easing potential local land use restrictions. It also is considering a bill that would provide tax incentives for off-shore

wind projects. In the meantime, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has proposed rules aimed at facilitating permits for wind projects.

While wind power currently accounts for only 2 percent of the total renewable energy consumed in the U.S., its use has been growing rapid-

ly. The environmental, economic and political climate also are pushing us toward a future with less fossil fuel and a greater use of renewable energy sources – including wind. ❖

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