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Offshore wind farm could be the size of a small town

A Chapel Hill entrepreneur hopes to tap the formidable wind resources off the coast of North Carolina.

By John Murawski
john.murawski@newsobserver.com
Posted: Sunday, Sep. 06, 2009



Windmills similar to these Vestas Wind Systems turbines at North Hoyle in Wales, western Britain, are proposed for the N.C. coast.

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Chandler gives Bobcats a

strong voice in

Outer Banks, the ocean waters could soon give rise to a wind energy farm the size of a small town.

For more than a year, a tiny company has been laying plans for a project that would catapult North Carolina into a leadership role in offshore wind energy development. Outer Banks Ocean Energy Corp. of Chapel Hill is planning to build a wind farm in the federal waters about 25 miles offshore to chase a dream of harnessing pollution-free electricity generated by some of the nation's best wind resources.

Chandler gives letters
The more wind farm has yet to be built in this country, and the hurdles are formidable. North Carolina is considered one of the nation's best wind resources, but fierce opposition has shot down proposals to build commercial wind projects in the state and on the coast.

strong voice in the middle
Lookout Energy Preserve likely would have to overcome intense public criticism and rigorous regulatory scrutiny. The project could take seven years and would cost at least \$900million. The company would have to secure hurricane-resistant towers to the ocean floor.

Observer
The founder, Donald Evans, 74, an entrepreneur, calls the project a "colossal undertaking" but considers it one of the country's best energy options.

Defiance
"It's an inexhaustible, clean energy resource," he said. "It's been there since the Earth was here."

eye! major problem!
The president has embraced wind power as the nation's salvation from global warming and unpredictable energy costs.

serious doubts
In the coming months, his company plans to hold community meetings in the state's coastal counties to introduce the project to the public. The company also will apply for a federal permit to build towers in the ocean to test wind speeds.

Defiance admits to battling
The company's plan to build a 400-tower wind farm provides a little more than 1 percent of the nation's electricity, but it's the fastest-growing form of renewable energy. It has attracted financiers and state governments are betting on wind power and other forms of renewable energy as states enact renewable mandates and Congress debates global warming legislation. The Obama Administration's plan to invest \$3 billion to cover 30 percent of the costs for wind farms and other renewable energy projects.

serious doubts
The power plant consists of oversize, three-blade propellers that would reach 400 feet into the sky. At least 50 towers would be required for the first phase, but the exact total would be determined by the power capacity of the type of turbine selected.

serious doubts
Even at such a dizzying height, the array of whirling blades would not be visible from shore. Plans call for eventually building the size of the wind farm to at least 150 towers spread out over 54 square miles – an area nearly the size of Fayetteville.

serious doubts
The Cape Lookout Energy Preserve wouldn't generate electricity until 2014 at the earliest – two years behind a bitterly contested wind farm being developed on Cape Cod, and a year behind a controversy-ridden Bluewater Wind project in Delaware. In South Carolina, the Santee Cooper power company has begun testing offshore wind speeds as part of a plan to develop an ocean-based wind farm.

serious doubts
The Chapel Hill company still would have to run detailed studies on sea bed formation, bird flight patterns and fish movements, as well as commercial shipping lanes and military training zones. Large offshore tracts probably would be removed from consideration by conflicting recreational, environmental, commercial and military uses.

serious doubts
Wind farms typically evoke public controversy over esthetics, property values, noise, shadow flicker, radio reception interference, unsightly transmission lines and, at sea, disruptions to popular fishing and recreational areas.

North Carolina environmental regulators would have to approve permits to allow undersea and overland power lines close to shore. Coastal Resources Commission Chairman Bob Emory, whose agency held hearings on offshore wind power last week, said state officials will need at least a year to develop the energy policies required for offshore wind farms. "We're not in a position to issue a permit," Emory said.

Staff researcher LamaraWilliams contributed

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penguin1 wrote on 09/06/2009 11:06:14 PM:

joecrash1, It must be a Harley.

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panthersphan wrote on 09/06/2009 05:30:41 PM:

Glad to hear that NC is turn down the proposed oil rigs out there (you can have them Virginia) and are for the Wind Farm...great job NC!

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Slagathor wrote on 09/06/2009 04:54:04 PM:

Replying to joecrash1 (09/06/2009 04:22:11 PM):
"What I ride on a daily basis gets 40 MPG, can be used in the HOV lane, and doesnt brand me as a candy! Laugh at that."

You look like a man who enjoys a good pie. Pecan?

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joecrash1 wrote on 09/06/2009 04:22:11 PM:

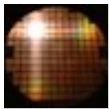


Replying to silicon28 (09/06/2009 02:32:37 PM):
 "I'm one of those Prius owners in favor of something like this. I'm laughing at you... all the way to the bank with 53 mpg. Let me guess? You're driving a Suburban or Expedition?":

What I ride on a daily basis gets 40 MPG, can be used in the HOV lane, and doesnt brand me as a candy! Laugh at that.

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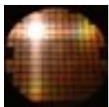
silicon28 wrote on 09/06/2009 02:32:37 PM:

Replying to joecrash1 (09/06/2009 10:00:43 AM):
 "Let some prissy Prius owner wade out in the surf and plug up to that.
 ZZZZZZZT!
 Brian says that is just PIE in the sky.":

I'm one of those Prius owners in favor of something like this. I'm laughing at you... all the way to the bank with 53 mpg. Let me guess? You're driving a Suburban or Expedition?

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silicon28 wrote on 09/06/2009 02:29:35 PM:

Replying to tigerndawoodz (09/06/2009 12:32:04 PM):
 "why don't we build more nuclear plants, the ultimate clean energy?":

Nuclear is clean? Tell me where we're going to store waste for hundreds to thousands of years... Nevada doesn't want it - Savannah River is not a solution - Oak Ridge is practically radioactive... Want to try another cliché'?

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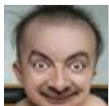
WordsWordsWords wrote on 09/06/2009 02:18:25 PM:

Replying to jeffmiller1958 (09/06/2009 09:30:44 AM):
 "when was the last time a terrorist supported by profits from wind power staged an attack on the United States?":

T. Boone Pickens

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Slagathor wrote on 09/06/2009 01:49:12 PM:

Replying to tigerndawoodz (09/06/2009 12:30:42 PM):
 "why don't we tap the readily available reserves in the Gulf or Alaska. BP just hit a large deposit with a deep well in the gulf.":

Because, just like pie, when it is all gone there is no more.

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Antietum wrote on 09/06/2009 12:50:53 PM:

Replying to dad2farfel (09/06/2009 11:58:13 AM):
 "This is not a left vs. right issue. Shouldn't we explore ALL sources of domestic energy? Like most people, I am skeptical of monetary claims (talk about potential for cost over runs). But we need energy. Wind farms off our coast, wind farms in the mountains, solar energy cells in our desert...":

"Wind farms off our coast, wind farms in the mountains,..."

...I own two mountain ridgelines in western NC....the windfarm contracts say the operators will pay for erecting the 38 story towers....but they don't say anything about the cost of taking them down when the government subsidy runs out...I get

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