

3. **RENEWABLE ENERGY: States seal pact to lure offshore wind industry to their shores** (11/11/2009)

Evan Lehmann, E&E reporter

Three states seeking offshore wind energy promised yesterday to help each other develop shared transmission efforts and establish cross-border incentives for the erection of mammoth marine turbines.

The move by Delaware, Maryland and Virginia marks perhaps the first formal agreement among states aimed at sharing infrastructure in order to hasten the construction of sea-based wind facilities.

The three-page **memorandum of understanding** signed by the governors indicates that the neighboring states could cooperate to build an underwater transmission spine able to connect multiple offshore facilities. The states might also pool their resources to expand onshore electricity lines to feed the coastal power to seashore cities.

"We recognize that there is a need to address the cost of the transmission and the strategy of how we approach transmission from offshore wind to meet the load in the region," said Ross Tyler, director of clean energy for the Maryland Energy Administration. "It makes total sense to do this collaboratively, rather than as individual states."

The states' borders merge tightly on the Delmarva Peninsula, a coastal spur situated to the east of several cities, like Wilmington, Del., Baltimore, Md., and Washington, D.C. That small land space makes the states natural partners when it comes to sharing resources on and off land.

Sharing the offshore breezes

The states are "very connected" geographically, said Walter Musial, an expert on wind power with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory. "Therefore, their offshore resources would need to be somewhat coordinated if they didn't want to step on each other's toes."

"This is the first time I've seen a multi-state agreement where they might be attempting to pool their resources," he added. "That's a positive thing."

The document doesn't contain concrete steps, but it establishes an important framework that signals the states' eagerness to attract wind developers and turbine manufacturers to the area, experts said.

If the states quickly decide to develop transmission lines capable of zipping, say, 1,000 megawatts from ocean turbines to cities, that could attract developers into the region. It could also bring turbine manufacturers to one or more of the states. That, in turn, could fuel other jobs that supply manufacturers with parts and materials.

"If there is any kind of offshore wind deployment in our region, all three states have much to benefit from immediate supply," Tyler said.

The move comes as Congress considers reshaping the country's electricity supply toward renewable energy. There's a big push to build a more robust transmission network able to carry Midwestern wind power to hungry East Coast states. Advocates in the East, however, have become more vocal in their opposition to that idea. Instead, they say, big cities on the East Coast should be powered by local ocean winds.

Competition still hot to be first

"This is a framework for how to build an industry, not just a couple offshore wind projects in isolation," said Mark Sinclair, executive director of the Clean Energy Group, which has promoted state cooperation on offshore power. "That's a sophisticated approach."

A consortium of Eastern states launched the U.S. Offshore Wind Collaborative this fall to promote the industry. And now the three-state agreement marks a new working attitude to lure developers to the region.

"State leaders recognized early the potential of the offshore wind industry to provide thousands of jobs and deploy significant

amounts of non-polluting energy," Hans Detweiler, director of state policy for the American Wind Energy Association, said in a statement. "The wind energy industry stands ready to work with these and other governors to make this vision a reality."

The move also comes as states are elbowing each other in the scramble to finish the nation's first offshore wind project. The pacesetter, Cape Wind, a 130-turbine proposal off the coast of Massachusetts, is hitting new delays in the final stretch of its approval process.

Some other states still believe they can build the maiden facility. Delaware is among them, having established the first long-term contract to buy power from a proposed offshore facility.

"Delaware is poised to be the first state in the nation to develop an offshore wind farm, bringing clean power to the region and creating hundreds of jobs," Gov. Jack Markell, a Democrat, said in a statement. "This agreement will help us leverage the resources and energy of our three state governments to help our region become the true powerhouse for this important source of renewable, reliable alternative energy."

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