

SEPTEMBER 25, 2015

Offshore Wind a Viable Source for Future Electrical Energy

Significant work of North Strand Coastal Wind Team

Wind captured for power since about 2000 B.C.

Offshore windmills far better than oil drilling platforms



By The Editorial Board

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/opinion/editorials/article36599817.html>

It's evident, or should be, that electrical energy in the future will come from sources other than fossil fuels such as coal, oil or even natural gas. Offshore winds are one of the most viable alternate energy sources and coastal South Carolina residents should applaud ongoing efforts to produce power from the wind.

The North Strand Coastal Wind Team has done important work to identify and promote an area several miles off the northeastern tip of Horry County as an

excellent site for a future wind farm. This is looking forward several years, but wind turbines will generate electricity and flow through cables to the regional electric grid. The federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management has identified four areas offshore that are suitable for power turbine towers.

Of course, it's far more complicated than constructing turbine towers and "running a power line to shore," as reported by Bruce Smith of The Associated Press. Before any turbines are constructed, "there will be extensive studies" on the effect on sea creatures such as the North Atlantic right whales that migrate and have their calves off South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

Visual pollution also is a concern. Pawleys Island in November 2014 officially opposed turbine towers that could be seen from land. None of the BOEM-identified sites are closer than 6 nautical miles, or about 6.9 miles. A nautical mile, measured on an arc of the earth, equals 1.1508 miles. Another concern has been expressed about the route of power lines from the offshore turbines to the shore. Such concerns about wind power diminish when one thinks about potential offshore oil drilling platforms – or testing for petroleum deposits.

Marc Jordan, CEO of the North Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce, notes that the cables would not have to run in a straight line. Jordan and the chamber helped set up the Wind Team, which includes 16 partners, such as Coastal Carolina University, the city of North Myrtle Beach, Clemson University, the Jim Caudle Reef Foundation and the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy. The city has "committed to becoming a demonstration city in the area of alternative energy," according to the Wind Team website.

The wind has been a source of power for mankind for thousands of years. The Chinese and Persians built windmills around 2000 B.C. Before electricity in rural areas, windmills pumped water from wells across much of the United States and windmills still operate in western states. Giant wind turbines line miles of Interstate 70 in Kansas. Several wind farms are situated along Interstate 39 in northern Illinois. The state of Missouri at one point opposed power lines to carry electricity east from the Kansas wind farms.

All sources of power, and especially transmission lines, are opposed by one group or another. Coal and oil are out, mostly for good environmental reasons, although the United States has untapped coal deposits that in the distant future surely will

be safely and cleanly used, perhaps after conversion to gas. Nuclear power plants are too dangerous, so those naysayers claim. Solar panels and windmills create visual pollution. Landowners everywhere in farming country hate transmission lines. Now we have environmentalists concerned about future power lines under the floor of the ocean.

Future Coastal Carolinians will need more electrical energy – likely sooner than we might think. If additional energy is not generated from the wind, then what source? We cannot revert to burning whale oil or olive oil. Wind turbines, especially those miles offshore, need not be considered “visual pollution” but as vital sources of energy and a better life.

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