

Maine isles to support 'offshore' wind project

HANCOCK, MASS.: EOS Ventures, the renewable energy development company based at Jiminy Peak, is engineering a \$14 million wind turbine project for two islands, Vinalhaven and North Haven, located 13 miles off the coast of Maine.

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According to Tyler Fairbank, president and CEO of EOS, the firm's personnel is overseeing design and construction of the project as well as procurement and delivery of three, 1.5 megawatt turbines from GE. The turbines will be erected on a Vinalhaven and will generate roughly 11,500 megawatt hours per year, or a little more than the equivalent of all the power used on the islands annually.

Fairbank noted that George Baker, CEO of the development company Fox Island LLC and a professor at Harvard Business School, was insistent that the project be completed by the end of the year because the need is so acute.

The 2,000 residents of the two islands, primarily a summer tourist destination, belong to a customer-owned utility cooperative known as the Fox Island Electric Coop. They pay roughly three times the national average for electricity. Last summer, members of the coop voted 384 to 5 in favor of the project.

"The year-round community is desperate -- they are looking for some way to make the community viable because energy prices are just killing them," Baker said. "And EOS' experience with procurement, construction and logistics have been incredible important to our ability to get this project built, and get it done this year. And their relationship with GE has been essential to getting to where we are."

Through EOS's contacts at GE and experience with logistics and turbine erection, the operational target date of October was put in place. Work started in early June. Projects of this type usually take a minimum of two to three years to complete. EOS and Fox Islands started project planning last September. Turbine delivery is anticipated in August.

The turbines will provide an excess of power in the winter, and a portion of the area's summer power needs. Baker noted that the power generated would average out to slightly more power than the island residents use on an annual basis, and reduce the average power bill by between 10 and 20 percent.

"All of the economic benefits if this project flow back to the community members," Baker said. "Instead of the money going into some developer's pocket, the power is going to be used locally and the money is going to stay local as well. If you really allow people to share in the benefits of one of these projects, they love turbines in their back yard."

The crane that will be used to erect the turbines will be transported to the site on 18 flatbed trucks. The turbines' components will need another 27 flatbed trucks. The trucks and all the construction materials will reach the island on barges.

"This is the first wind project we have been involved with as an entity, so for us it's very important," Fairbank said. "And it is the second largest coastal wind project on the east coast, so it helps us build momentum as we're developing other parts of the project."