

Offshore wind

Tom Bouchelle <bouchelle5@comcast.net>

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To:HearingComments, DNREC (MailBox Resources) <DNRECHearingComments@delaware.gov>

I'm not entirely opposed to wind turbines: Nuclear power plants and coal- and gas- burning facilities aren't attractive either. I'm also skeptical that wind turbines will harm tourism. But that's as far as I go.

I'm against this project as follows:

1) A promise to escrow in the future for possible cleanup costs is ridiculous even to consider. If the project will be a hands-down, no-doubt-it slam bang home run, pony up now.

2) The towers have grown 600 feet since the first public meeting I attended. We have to wonder what other excesses the developer has up its sleeve.

3) The technology is untested with respect to the extreme height of the towers. But besides that, how does the developer provide for power when winds are calm or store power. How reliant would we be on foreign sources for batteries or replacement parts? How and where will worn out or damaged parts be recycled?

4) The towers are expected to make us more vulnerable to attack, not only because they obscure radar signals but, if they truly become significant power sources they'll have to be defended. I haven't heard how the developer proposes to do that and wrap that cost into the overall deal.

5) The effect on marine animals and fisheries is unknown. What is known is that the construction of the project and subsequent operations will cause deafening noise underwater that could be harmful to fisheries and marine mammals. I don't know whether animals would be affected or not but the suggestion that they'd adapt is a risk only the developer is willing to casually take on.

6) Permitting the developer to dig trenches under an inland bay to get cables to Indian River is suspiciously "un-DNREC".

7) If this project is a dud, it could take years to clean it up, no doubt at public expense, and when the cleanup is done we may find that what was lost will never come back. Had it not been for public outcry, DNREC (along with the Inland Bays Foundation) was prepared to cede a chunk of Fenwick Island State Park to a previous developer in exchange for pickleball courts, expanded bathhouses and a parking garage, none of which would serve anyone's idea of preserving natural assets. However, restoring the park would have been pocket change compared to what it will cost to dismantle and dispose of even one of these towers.

8) This is Delaware, the state where public officials shoveled hundreds of millions of dollars into projects like Fisker Automotive. The promised public benefit never came, the jobs didn't happen and the jury is still out on the practicality of the technology itself, even after all these years. However, this time, we're not being asked for mere money whose loss will be forgotten. This time we're being asked to put a significant, irreplaceable natural asset on the line. It could turn out to be the worst bet ever.

Tom Bouchelle
Fenwick Island