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## Wind power firm eyes Maine

By [Kevin Miller](#)  
Saturday, August 09, 2008 - Bangor Daily News

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A Boston company that is developing wind turbines capable of operating in deeper waters is eyeing the coast of Maine for a large wind-energy project.

Representatives of Blue H USA have been talking with state leaders about their plans to locate a complex of wind turbines somewhere in the Gulf of Maine.

An exact location has not been selected yet, Blue H officials said, but any site likely would be far enough at sea so that the large turbines would not be visible from land.

"What we're trying to do is focus in and find an appropriate location in the state of Maine that will have minimal impact on the fisheries and the environment," Raymond Dackerman, general manager for the company, said Thursday.

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Thursday.

Maine is rapidly becoming one of the East Coast's premier destinations for wind energy. To date, all of the projects that have been approved or proposed in Maine are land-based.

But experts estimate more than 100,000 megawatts of potential wind energy is available for tapping in the Gulf of Maine, where the resource blows strong and steady year round. By comparison, all homes and businesses in Maine eat up about 2,200 megawatts of electricity at peak usage on a hot summer day.

The challenge has been developing technology capable of operating in deep waters.

Blue H USA claims to have developed and patented a turbine that is shorter and lighter than most land-based industrial turbines yet produces more power. The turbines sit on a floating platform modeled after technology used with oil and gas drilling platforms.

The two-bladed turbines can be located in 150- to 900-foot-deep water and are connected by chains to an enormous anchor weight. Because the turbines are deployed in deep waters far from shore, they should avoid the type of public relations battles with coastal landowners that has plagued the Cape Wind project near Cape Cod, company officials said.

Blue H has deployed a demonstration turbine in Italian waters and hopes to begin construction on a full-scale, commercial project at the Italian site next year, Dackerman said.

The company also has filed paperwork with the U.S. Minerals Management Service seeking a lease for a similar demonstration project off the coast of Massachusetts. If successful, the Massachusetts project could grow into a 120-turbine facility generating at capacity more than 400 megawatts of electricity.

Preliminary plans for the hypothetical Maine project call for 90 larger turbines capable of cranking out up to 450 megawatts.

"As we move forward in Massachusetts we are similarly moving forward in Maine," said Martin Reilly, a Blue H spokesman.

Blue H officials claim their system is also more cost-efficient because the entire structure — from the turbines and towers to the floating platform and anchor — is assembled on land and then hauled by tugboat to the location.

Dackerman said construction of such massive structures requires highly skilled laborers such as those found in Maine's shipbuilding industry. He said Blue H is already talking with potential partner companies, including Pittsfield-based Cianbro, which is constructing massive building modules for an oil refinery at its new Brewer facility.

"We feel the skilled labor force here in Maine is very compatible with building our turbines," Dackerman said.

Company officials have met with Gov. John Baldacci, members of Maine's congressional delegation and other business or government leaders in recent weeks to discuss their plans. On Thursday, Dackerman and Reilly briefed former Gov. Angus King, a partner in a wind-energy development firm.

King's company, Independence Wind, has focused on building wind-energy projects on land. But King is a strong believer that wind energy's biggest potential is off the coast of Maine. And while he said Blue H still has research and development to do, King was excited about the prospects.

"This is one of those things where the more I think about it, the more it makes sense to me," King said of offshore wind-energy projects. "There is just a gigantic amount of energy out there and why should we be importing from people who don't like us when it is right there on our shores?"

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