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## Editorial: A wind farm even skeptics can support

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GHS  
Posted May 14, 2008 @ 12:55 AM

Wind energy opponents - including those who have stalled for years the Cape Wind project in Nantucket Sound - rattle off a litany of objections: Windmills aren't aesthetically pleasing (a notion many dispute); they pose a danger to migrating birds; they're noisy; they're inefficient and expensive.

But a new proposal for a deep-water, off-shore wind farm answers all the skeptics' objections and, in addition to its environmental benefits, could be an economic boon to southeastern Massachusetts.

Blue H USA LLC has recently installed the world's first deep-water windmill off the coast of Italy and now wants to bring that technology to the South Coast, which has been referred to as the Saudi Arabia of wind energy because of its dependable North Atlantic winds. Rather than fight critics, Blue H has embraced their concerns and worked to satisfy them, maximizing the positives of the technology while minimizing the perceived negatives.

The solution? Locate the turbines out to sea on floating - but stabilized - platforms similar to oil rigs, far away from any people or animals. The New England farm would be situated 48 miles off the coast of New Bedford, 32 miles off of Block Island. It would be invisible from the shore. It does not interfere with any shipping channels, flight paths or popular recreational boating areas. Noise issues are obviously mitigated, and the impact on wildlife is minimal in a location without a high concentration of life. In fact, counterweights that will be sunk to stabilize the platforms will act as artificial reefs, actually benefiting marine life.

It turns out answering the critics is actually a benefit to the technology, as 90 percent of the potential energy from wind is well offshore in deep water. A wind farm similar to the one Blue H is proposing could add 420 mega-watts of energy to the power grid, enough to power about 120,000 homes, according to Blue H USA General manager Raymond Dackerman. And those numbers could go even higher when the grid is capable of accepting more, he said.

The wind turbines would be built onshore and floated out to their locations, which further mitigates the environmental impact of building at sea - which is the common practice with shallow-water wind farms - and presents a potentially huge economic development opportunity to Fall River, where the turbines would logically be built.

The project also supports the Patrick administration's goal of making Massachusetts a center for alternative energy technology. This sounds like a good deal for everybody. We wouldn't be surprised to see opposition or regulatory hurdles appear, but there's reason to hope this deep-sea adventure will have smoother sailing than Cape Wind.

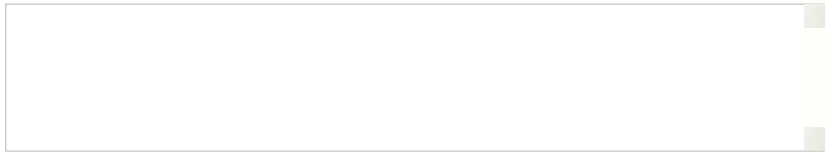
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RW 9 hours ago Report Abuse

Thanks for the overview on deep water wind, and Blue H. This technology, however is far from proven, and is decades away from being viable. Unfortunately, we don't have decades. This is why Cape Wind and other available solutions need to be fast tracked to implementation. Blue H appears to be an elegant solution which could then provide further capacity when it is viable in the 2015 - 2020 timeframe.

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