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Rhode Island company proposes wind farm 30 miles off Montauk

A Rhode Island company is proposing to erect a 35-turbine wind farm about 30 miles off the coast of Montauk in the latest in a series of efforts to build utility-scale wind-power projects in waters off Long Island.

Deepwater Wind, which has twice proposed LIPA energy projects, said if its latest proposal is accepted, it would produce around 200 megawatts of energy for the region by 2018. The cost would be about \$1 billion.

Deepwater already is working on a five-turbine project off the coast of Block Island after securing a power contract there. Construction began in December, said Deepwater chief executive Jeffrey Grybowski, and the project is expected to be up and running by 2016.

The newly proposed project for Long Island, which comes in response to a LIPA request for proposals for renewable energy announced last year, would be south of Rhode Island and Massachusetts and not visible from the Montauk coast, Grybowski said. LIPA is expected to announce the winning bid by December.

Deepwater said it has already paid \$3.8 million for the federal lease for 256 square miles of ocean waters for wind proposals.

Turbines of up to six megawatts each would be placed in 100 feet to 120 feet of water on platforms similar to those that support offshore oil and gas drilling. An undersea cable would connect to the LIPA electrical system on the East End.

Deepwater said the project, if accepted by LIPA, would be the first utility-scale offshore wind farm in the United States. A LIPA spokesman declined to comment.

LIPA, along with the New York Power Authority and Con Edison, already has proposed a wind farm for the waters off the South Shore. It awaits further state studies and the awarding of a federal lease.

Deepwater had proposed a much larger wind farm of nearly 1,000 megawatts in a previous LIPA request for proposals in the same waters. LIPA instead accepted a separate proposal to erect a new 750-megawatt plant on the Caithness Energy property in Yaphank.

Deepwater, under the previous name Winergy Power, had proposed a wind farm in the waters off Plum Island, but withdrew it to pursue the Block Island proposal.

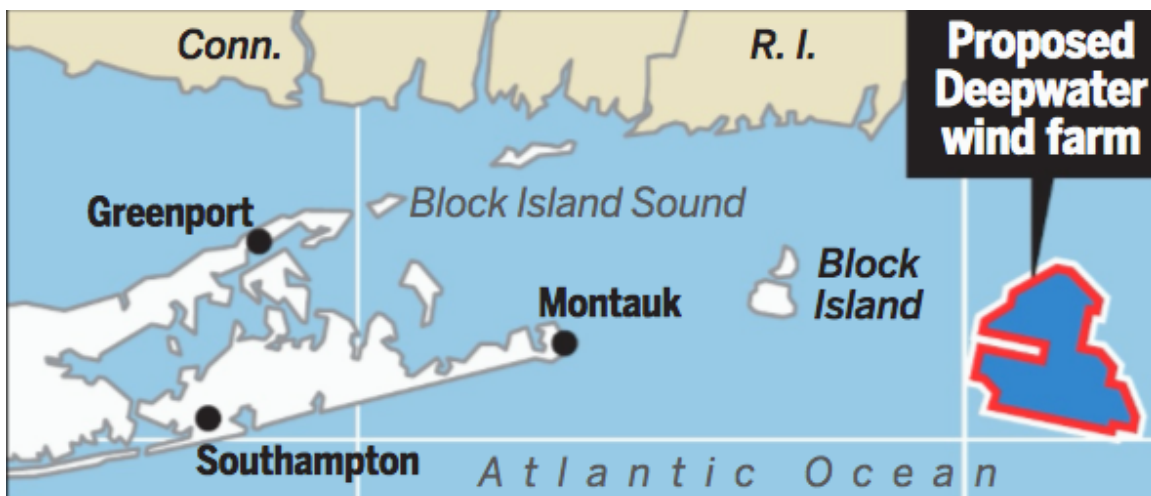
A 40-turbine project planned for the waters five miles off Jones Beach was nixed in 2007 because its \$800 million-plus price tag was considered too high. The Deepwater proposal would produce 200 megawatts -- 60 megawatts more power than the Jones Beach proposal -- with five fewer turbines.

Grybowski said his newest proposal will be competitive with any other renewable energy proposal.

"We expect to be extremely competitive in terms of pricing," he said. "We believe it will be far lower than anyone has proposed for an offshore wind farm to date." Environmentalists have long supported offshore wind projects around Long Island, but at least one group is questioning the benefit of Deepwater's plan.

"It's green energy for investors only," said Bonnie Brady, executive director of the Long Island Commercial Fishing Assoc., a Montauk-based group that has opposed some of the projects because of impacts on sea bottom and reduced fishing access.

Grybowski said the federal government and Deepwater have met with fishing interests and have agreed keep turbines off the most important fishing sectors.



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