

In the Breeze

Volume 2 Issue 3

<http://vwec.cisat.jmu.edu>

Summer 2006



Virginia enacts its first comprehensive energy policy: Senate Bill 262

Senate Bill 262, enacted this past April, defines the new energy policy for Virginia. Within this legislation, the 2006 General Assembly specifically recognized that the “following objectives pertaining to energy issues will advance the health, welfare, and safety of the residents of the Commonwealth: Increasing Virginia’s reliance on sources of energy that, compared to traditional energy resources, are less polluting of the Commonwealth’s air and waters; and recognizing the need to foster those economically developable alternative sources of energy that can be provided at market prices as vital components of a diversified portfolio of energy resources.” This legislation is comprehensive in nature, supporting an array of energy technologies and measures in order to utilize more effectively Virginia’s indigenous resources. The new Virginia energy policy authorizes solar and wind energy production and utilization grant programs, and also creates the *Virginia Coastal Energy Research Consortium*.

VSWIP Update

Small wind projects that are scheduled to receive funding through the *Virginia Small Wind Incentives Program* continue to progress toward installation. In July, a 1-kW Bergey XL.1 (pictured above) was installed in Northumberland County on a temporary tower for demonstration through September. The turbine is intended to help assuage concerns of residents and county board members regarding visual and auditory impacts. Two VSWIP awardees, Gordon & Judy Burgess, and Joe & Quincy Umphlette, are residents of Northumberland County and have experienced some local resistance to their planned installations. It is anticipated that ten small wind turbines will be installed with VSWIP support by the end of the calendar year. The final round of funding was awarded in January 2006.

Virginia upgrades its net-metering legislation: House Bill 1541

The 2006 General Assembly amended Virginia’s net metering law to, among other things, 1) allow net-metered customers to lease their net-metered equipment; and 2) allow third parties to operate net-metered equipment on behalf of net-metered customers. Several parties provided comments to the State Corporation Commission in the matter of Section 1252 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, urging the Commission to amend its net metering rules to allow net-metered customers to receive Time-of-Use metering and billing services from their local distribution utility. The Commission’s current net metering rules explicitly prohibit local distribution utilities from offering Time-of-Use metering and billing to net-metered customers, even though the legislation authorizing net metering contains no such restriction. Further actions are in play in attempt to permit Time-of-Use net-metering.

Anemometer Loan Program Update

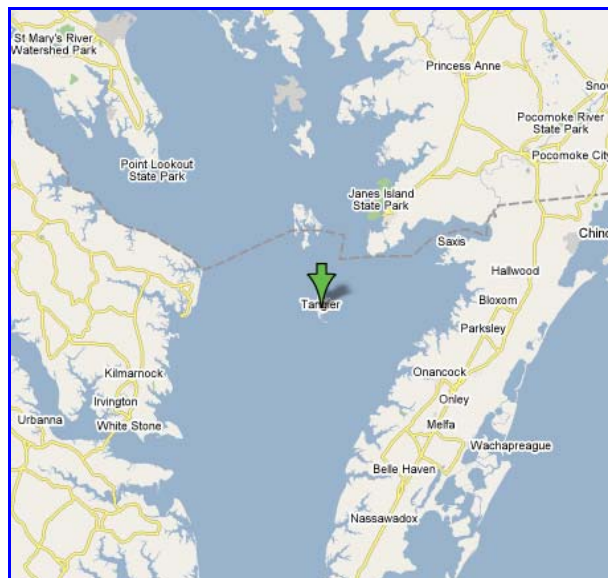
We are pleased to announce that the James Madison University office of the Virginia Wind Energy Collaborative (VWEC/JMU) has partnered with the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) to form and administer a Maryland Anemometer Loan Program (MDALP). VWEC/JMU will be responsible for the selection of the initial best candidate sites and for developing the administration of the program. Ultimately, the MEA intends to pass along the administrative duties to a Maryland University. At a recent event at BP Solar, Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. stated, "I want Maryland to be the number one alternative energy state in the U.S." It is hoped that the creation of an anemometer loan program for Maryland will help the state move in the right direction.

The Virginia Wind Energy Collaboration was created to educate the public and inform decision-makers about wind energy development in Virginia, in support of the Commonwealth’s need for reliable and affordable energy, environmental quality, and economic development.

Tangier Island Project

Tangier Island (shown on map) is being studied by a research team at James Madison University to determine the feasibility of a community wind power project. An array of tasks is being conducted including an analysis of the wind resource on Tangier Island. An in-depth study was conducted during the past summer in order to inform the research team on topics ranging from native culture to the energy infrastructure on the island. The team recently visited Tangier Island to explore ideas and discuss elements of the study with Mayor Gerald Wheatley.

There are numerous forthcoming activities in support of this project, including a team visit to Tangier Island in late August during which the team will present the project at a public meeting where citizens will have the opportunity to ask questions or express any concerns. Two graduate students and three undergraduate majors from the Department of Integrated Science and Technology at JMU will participate in this effort. A final presentation and report will be provided to the Tangier Community in 2007.



Siting Program Announcement

Senate Bill 262, described earlier in this newsletter, calls for the creation of a scoring system for the siting of wind and solar power facilities. With support from the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy, James Madison University will develop the *Virginia Renewables Scoring System for Siting (VRS³)*. It will be designed to ascribe numerical scores to parcels of real property based on the extent to which the parcels are suitable for the siting of wind and solar energy facilities. An advisory working group will be appointed to review and advise the JMU team during the creation of the VRS³. The development of this instrument will leverage the resources and knowledge base gained during the creation of the *Landscape Classification System for Virginia[†]* and will also be informed by elements of the *State-Based Anemometer Loan Program (SBALP) Parcel Project*. Additional GIS data sets that describe wildlife, cultural, historical, economic, and technological elements of the landscape will be utilized during the development of the VRS³. During the development of the scoring system, the JMU team will hold informational sessions to describe this project and solicit input in those regions throughout the state in which solar and wind development is most feasible.

[†] http://vwec.cisat.jmu.edu/gis_lcs.htm