



South Carolina to begin offshore wind study



Jim Huff / SANTEE COOPER

Santee Cooper and other agencies announced March 9 at a Georgetown press conference a study of the energy potential in offshore winds that could be harvested by wind turbines situated in coastal waters. Six instrument laden buoys such as this one, and two land-based stations will measure wind speed, direction and frequency at stations up to six miles out into the ocean.

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FROM LOCAL REPORTS

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GEORGETOWN - Officials with Santee Cooper, Coastal Carolina University and the South Carolina Energy Office announced on March, the launch of weather buoys that will measure wind off the coast of Georgetown and Little River, a significant step that positions South Carolina as a leader in the rapidly developing national wind energy landscape.

The buoy deployment will be followed by Santee Cooper's installation of an offshore platform in about six months, near one of the buoy paths. Coastal Carolina researchers, working closely with counterparts at North Carolina State University, will evaluate the buoy data to help pinpoint the best location for the platform, which will measure upper-level winds more similar to those a wind turbine would encounter. The offshore wind platform is expected to gather data for at least a year.

Costs associated with the buoy project are being paid by Santee Cooper and by a U.S. Department of Energy grant administered by the South Carolina Energy Office. Specifically, the grant money is helping fund Coastal Carolina's role in the buoy research. Santee Cooper will pay for the platform.

"Santee Cooper believes that all reasonable renewable energy initiatives must be explored, and wind energy is a promising opportunity for South Carolina," said Lonnie Carter, Santee Cooper president and chief executive officer. "As a public power company, Santee Cooper is committed to providing South Carolinians with affordable, reliable energy that is protective of our environment. We have been testing wind viability onshore for several years, and the experience has encouraged us to take this next important step.

The buoys are provided by N.C. State. In addition to the partners in this offshore project, stakeholders include Clemson University, the Savannah River National Laboratory, the University of South Carolina's Baruch Research Institute, and EcoEnergy LLC.

There are no offshore wind installations anywhere in the United States, and so there are many challenges still to resolve. The two projects announced today will gather data for at least the next 18 months. Meanwhile, a group of state stakeholders will begin considering how to permit offshore wind turbines, and a separate group will be considering transmission needs. Federal permitting is also under development.

This new research will continue to advance South Carolina's wind energy deliberations while these other significant issues are tackled.