

Public Input to the Delaware Policy Process

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Seminar Abstract
February 21, 2008**

This seminar outlines a proposed analysis of public comments submitted to the Delaware Public Service Commission regarding the 2006 Request For Proposals (RFP) for new in-state power generation. While previous studies have addressed public opinion and willingness to pay for wind power, this study asks why the public seems to strongly support the wind farm proposal. Taken at face value, the enthusiasm displayed by Delaware residents may seem to be a mandate for extensive offshore wind development on the east coast. It would be easy to assume that the opposition encountered by an offshore wind developer on Cape Cod is an anomaly and the relatively hospitable climate in Delaware is more representative of general feelings toward offshore wind on the east coast. However, local characteristics such as the opposition to the Indian River coal plant in Sussex County and the low-lying peninsula left vulnerable to sea-level rise may have produced another anomalous situation in Delaware. Though the primary purpose of the RFP was to ensure electric price stability, trends noted during tabulation of comments indicate an unexpected set of motivations. Many commentors cited concerns for the health of themselves and their communities, climate change, the state economy, the environment, and the welfare of future generations as reasons to accept the wind farm proposal. Few mentioned price stability at all. Understanding these motivations may inform future actions in the offshore wind industry as well as in energy, marine, and environmental policy.