# Maritime giant, Va. wind developer partner

STEVE SZKOTAK - Associated Press - Associated Press

A Virginia company proposing offshore wind projects in Atlantic waters is partnering with the global container ship giant Maersk to develop utility-scale wind farms in the United States.

The partnership between Apex Offshore Wind and Maersk signals a growing confidence in the slowly emerging offshore wind industry in the U.S., which lags behind the rest of the world, advocates say.

It is the second partnership created in Virginia between the wind industry and a company with the maritime muscle needed to deliver and install towering wind turbines in waters 10 or more miles off the coast. The other involved the Spanish wind giant Gamesa Technology Corp. and Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding.

The Apex and Maersk relationship links a company with an ambitious portfolio of wind projects and a shipping line that can help financing for the costly construction of wind energy facilities.

"It shows that two serious companies think offshore wind has major potential, which should help give some certainty to other potential investors," Jacqueline Savitz of the wind advocacy group Oceana wrote in an email Tuesday. "Apex knows the wind industry and Maersk is a leader in the shipping industry with a demonstrated commitment to cutting carbon dioxide emissions from its ships."

Apex, which is based in Charlottesville, is developing wind projects off Virginia, Maryland and North Carolina, and on Lake Erie. The company said it wants to help the U.S. achieve its goal of developing offshore winds capable of producing 54 gigawatts of power by 2030.

Apex President Tim Ryan said in a statement that to achieve that goal "will require maritime players with significant experience, scale and resources" such as Maersk.

Maersk Line Ltd, the Norfolk-based U.S. subsidiary of A.P. Moller-Maersk, brings to the partnership the maritime services and two new ships, each nearly 500 feet long, designed to deliver wind turbines.

"That expertise lends itself very well to offshore wind energy projects," Maersk spokesman Kevin Speers said. "A missing link in many of these projects is the understanding to actually execute the installation and maintenance."

Apex said it already has made "substantial progress" in developing offshore projects and establishing relationships with utilities and various levels of governments.

With Maersk's scale, expertise and maritime resources, "the two together will be

able to expedite Apex's efforts to bring proposed projects to reality," Ryan said.

The U.S. Interior Department is expected to issue the call within weeks for interest in developing offshore wind projects in waters off Virginia. Apex is among two companies that have issued unsolicited bids. Virginia Dominion Power, the state's No. 1 electric utility, is also expected to answer the call.

Offshore wind proponents say Virginia is positioned to take advantage of the new U.S. drive to develop offshore winds with its deep water port and shipbuilding industry. Winds and ocean depths are also seen as ideal off Virginia's coast.

Gamesa's Offshore Wind Technology Center in Chesapeake has been added to that mix. The center is designing prototypes for the next generation of offshore wind systems in the United States.

"We hope Virginia takes the lead," Speers said. "There certainly are the right signals that Virginia is moving in the right direction."

The Sierra Club, which has been critical of Gov. Bob McDonnell's approach to energy development, welcomed the partnership with a measure of caution.

"This is good news for Virginia, but we still lag behind other states which, unlike Virginia, have tangible incentives to develop offshore winds," Glen Besa, state director of the environmental group wrote in an email. "There is no guarantee that Apex will develop in Virginia if other states offer greater incentives."

McDonnell has advocated an "all-of-the-above" approach to energy development, including wind and fossil fuels such as coal.

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Steve Szkotak can be reached by Twitter at http://twitter.com/sszkotakap [1]

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Online:

Apex Offshore Wind: www.apexwind.com [2]

Maersk Line Ltd.: http://www.maersklinelimited.com [3]

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