Town of Hull receives 2003 Climate Award for communities

HARTFORD, CT—The Town of Hull, Massachusetts, home to the first commercial-scale electric generating wind turbine to go online anywhere on the U.S. coastline between Maine and Florida, has been named winner of the 2003 Climate Champions Award for communities.

The award, presented at the Climate Solutions for the Northeast conference here, cited Hull's progressive attitude toward renewable energy, noting the town had previously erected a 40-kiloWatt turbine on the site, called "Windmill Point."

The current Vestas V47, with a rotor-diameter of 154 Feet, and a hub-height of 164 Feet, is rated to produce 660 KW of power.

Clean Air – Cool Planet, the northeast's leading nonprofit seeking solutions to global warming, gives the Climate Champions Awards annually. The Portsmouth, NH-based climate-action and policy group works with corporations, colleges and universities and cities and towns throughout the northeast to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Also receiving Climate Champion Awards at the conference were Tufts University and the University of New Hampshire, and Shaw's Supermarkets.

In presenting the award Clean Air – Cool Planet Chairman Michael Bradley of M. J. Bradley & Associates, noted that Hull "has set an exciting example for communities across the continent seeking to capture wind energy to benefit public health, energy security, and the local economy.

The Hull turbine is owned and operated by Hull Light, a municipal electric utility that has been serving the ratepayers of the Town of Hull since 1894, according to John A. MacLeod, operations manager for the company.

In December of 2001, the turbine was erected at the tip of the Hull peninsula, known as "Windmill Point," adjacent to Hull's High School. December 27, 2001 at 2:45 PM, MacLeod recalls, "the local champions were there, with the Vestas crew to 'push the button' and put Hull's new turbine online."

Bradley notes that Hull "was clearly in the vanguard, and their process was closely watched by energy professionals, renewable energy enthusiasts, city planners, and environmentalists quite literally around the world."

In addition to being the first commercial turbine on the eastern U. S. coastline, it is also the first wind turbine in a city in North America, and, MacLeod notes, "the first turbine we know of that's within walking distance of public transit, so people can come and see it."

Among the most closely watched parts of the Hull process was financing and the sale of "green tags," or certificates for carbon credits that can be traded. The current contract, MacLeod notes "for $30.00/MWh is expected to net the town well over $40,000 per year. All of this," he said, "is revenue Hull was deliberate about 'not counting on' when we conducted our original financial analysis for the project.

"But what it all comes down to is that the 'green tags' are causing the pay-back period for Hull Wind 1 to be less than 4 years," MacLeod says, "which is one of the reasons the project has very solid support in our community of 11,000 people."

In fact, MacLeod says, "the most common complaint I hear is 'Why are you taking so long getting us our #2 turbine?'"

The planning for Hull Wind 2, and possibly Hull Wind 3 is underway, and might include 3.6 megaWatt offshore units, he says.

Bradley said that part of the rationale behind Clean Air – Cool Planet's choice of Hull is that the project has already won awards, the first of which, from *The Boston Globe*, was announced four days after the turbine was commissioned.

Four of the other awards stand out, Bradley says, in that they come from regional or national groups: a northeast regional EPA award in May, 2002, one from the U. S. Department of Energy in December of 2002, the Massachusetts Municipal Association's Pickard Award in January of 2003, and the American Wind Energy Association's Utility Leadership Award, May 2003.

"Those awards are for the project," Bradley says. "But our award is for the community, the citizens who were willing to take a risk in order to show that wind can work, and that it can work right next door."