# Importance of wind energy highlighted

## Experts discuss coastal development

By Bruce Smith
The Associated Press

CHARLESTON — Developing wind energy is important to South Carolina's economy and environment even though lower natural gas prices and the Great Recession have slowed development of wind energy, experts said Thursday.

South Carolina has the second-largest offshore wind resource on the East Coast and a goal of generating 1,000 megawatts of offshore wind power by the end of the decade, they said.

Government leaders, researchers and environmentalists discussed coastal wind development with reporters Thursday as the National Wildlife Federation issued a report on East Coast wind energy development.

"It looks like a lot of other states are ahead of us," said Steve Moore of the South Carolina Wildlife Federation. But, he added, "South Carolina stands to make tremendous economic gains from our offshore wind resources."

State Sen. Paul Campbell of Goose Creek, who chaired a state committee that four years ago looked into developing the state's wind resources, said the north coast between Georgetown and the North Carolina state line has suitable winds. He said the state has a goal of generating 1,000 megawatts in the area by 2020.

"With the advent of hydraulic fracturing and the new discovery of natural gas, some of the alternative and renewable energies have taken a little bit of a back seat because the need that was pressing a few

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years ago is not there today," he said.

But natural gas prices will eventually go up, he said. And South Carolina, with wind turbines being manufactured in Greenville and the Clemson University Wind Turbine Drive Train Test Facility being built in North Charleston, could be a leader in wind energy, Campbell said.

"These facilities here, the wind, the reputation the state has as for being a low-cost manufacturing area, and the port make it an ideal location for the industry to grow and service the Atlantic seaboard, which has the largest potential for offshore wind," said Nicholas Rigas, the renewable energy director for Clemson's Restoration Institute in North Charleston.

He said the test facility's role was recently expanded to test not just turbines but their electrical systems as well.

Chris Canevale of the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy says South Carolina has the second-largest wind resource on the East Coast.

"Our analysis shows South Carolina could install 35 gigawatts of offshore wind generation — more capacity than is already used in the entire state and enough to power 7.8 million homes," he said.

David Carr of the Southern Environmental Law Center said wind energy is the largest source of clean energy in the Southeast.

Wind energy, he said, will help the region deal with impacts of climate change caused by burning fossil fuel — changes such as rising sea levels and stronger hurricanes.