

Catching a business opportunity

BY GRESHAM HARKLESS
For the News & Messenger

In technology, as in other sectors, there are things which emerge and can be defined simply as game changers. The energy sector is no different from this phenomenon.

Catch the Wind Inc. is expecting to completely change the way that wind energy is measured, one particle of wind at a time.

The Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources Doug Domenech visited the Manassas firm to hear about the potential impact of the technology developed and used by companies such as BP

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JOHN BDAL/NEWS & MESSENGER

Daniel Lacroix of Catch the Wind explains the mechanics of the Vindicator Laser Wind Sensor to Maureen Matsen, Virginia deputy secretary of Natural Resources, and Doug Domenech, Virginia secretary of Natural Resources, at the Manassas-based wind energy corporation on Wednesday.

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Wind

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Wind Energy, the Nebraska Public Power District, Wind Energy Institute of Canada and the official supplier of the America's Cup.

Bill Fetzer, vice president of business development, stated that Catch the Wind addresses an important issue that energy firms have wondered for a long time, "how to measure the speed of wind or the speed of particles in the wind and the direction it is coming from and provide an answer or result of the wind flow and the direction."

Through its laser wind sensors — the Vindicator, the WindSeeker and the Racer's Edge — the company provides an answer other firms have been unable to supply.

ABOUT THE FIRM

» Catch the Wind Inc. is a high technology company headquartered in Manassas. The company was founded in 2008 to develop and manufacture laser-based wind sensor systems with a primary focus on developing technology to serve the wind power generation industry.

Each of the laser wind sensors, which vary in size and weight, affixes to the turbine and is capable of accurately reporting the wind turbulence 200 to 300 yards in advance. This technology could have a huge impact on the industry.

For farm owners who might already have turbines, Fetzer said that the technology is capable of working with "any turbine, anywhere and anytime."

The company believes that the technology will increase power output, the lifetime of turbines and a farm owner's return on investment, while decreasing operating costs.

With significant growth expected within the energy sector in the next five years and technology that cannot be duplicated, Catch the Wind asked Domenech and Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources Maureen Matsen for help in developing a joint venture to help train people with the skills needed to create the technology.

The director of Business Development and Marketing for Catch the Wind Inc. estimates the firm will need 500 workers within the next few years. Other potential avenues of development could be through programs at Northern Virginia Community College.