

A supportive role



Hiring the right people for the job is always important, but when the role entails navigating often unpredictable waters, providing the right personnel to support on work vessels is crucial. PES was keen to hear how Offshore Wind Farm Support, a relative newcomer to the industry, is drawing on its own experience at sea, in commercial fishing and offshore oil, to aid the next generation of offshore wind. We spoke to the company's co-owner, Troya Forsberg, to find out more.

PES: A warm welcome to PES Troya. I'm looking forward to finding out more about your company. Could you please give our readers a brief summary of Offshore Wind Farm Support to start with?

Troya Forsberg: It is good to speak to you. So, as a brief introduction, myself and my husband Paul established Offshore Wind Farm Support LLC about two years ago now. We are based in Florida and have several locations, from Massachusetts to Norfolk, Virginia. We are a woman/family-owned business, working to support the growing wind industry in the US. Primarily, we have placed personnel on work vessels, but do also offer various support roles that we are now beginning to add to our business plans.

When we began in January 2020, our focus was on helping struggling local fishermen to be part of the growth of renewable energy off the eastern coast of the United States. The acceptance of offshore windmills has been met with both positivity and negativity. We feel we bridge that gap with training, placement, and education of interested individuals. We aim to increase positive dialogue for all onshore communities, to understand the energy needs they face, much of which wind energy will solve.

Offshore Wind Farm Support provides specific workforce talent to wind developers for their personnel needs. Our seasoned pros on coastal waters make our talent pool uniquely qualified, as they typically have decades of working knowledge in the exact waters the development is commencing.

Since our inception we have more than tripled our personnel and have provided more trained onboard Fisheries Liaison Officers than any other company in the wind farm industry. Known as FLOs, they currently work alongside the captain and crew of survey vessels for the developers, avoiding any negative interactions on the water, as it pertains to the leased areas being surveyed or any geo-technical work that is needed.

Onboard Fisheries Liaison Officers are certified by us to provide real-time data, with knowledge-based interactions



Troya Forsberg

between working wind vessels and fishermen working on water.

PES: You are a relative newcomer to the industry, so how have you been finding things so far?

TF: Basically, all offshore wind farm industry work is new to the United States. We felt early on that we had unique insights for the type of support wind developers would need in the coastal waters in the northeast.

Paul grew up on those waters, in a fishing fleet family on the east end of Long Island. His family experiences with commercial fishing, for hire recreational fishing and running a ferry, gave him 40 years of experience. Paul also worked in the Gulf of Mexico in offshore oil, which is the cousin to clean sustainable wind energy in the northeast.

These decades of his own work, along with his business entrepreneurial ethic, created an opportunity for him to use this unique set of learned skills for our support company.

Our findings overall have been positive. It is a bit nerve wracking to always expect the unexpected. This has led to our personnel placement services ramping up, so we always have more individuals waiting for an opportunity to get on a vessel, than not. This year, however, we are seeing an



Paul Forsberg

increased demand for talented Fisheries Liaisons. We are working on contracts with six developers, and expect the seventh to utilize our services shortly.

PES: How does your experience in the marine field help make the valuable connection with the offshore industry? It's about building good relationships isn't it, so your background must help with that?

TF: Paul's family business has been great preparation. In effect, he has a 'rolodex' of over 60 years to pull his relationships from. Not many entrepreneurs can say the same.

Together we have woven a thread of customer service, marketing and pro-business aspects into our skills, that make for a great support company for this industry. We say we offer 'boots on the ground' because Paul has worn those boots and worked in the trenches on the water. One of his quips is 'when the suits need the boots, they call us.'

It is always about communication for how to deliver on our contracts, business operations as well as expectations for our personnel placed on vessels. As a teacher and small business owner, I am able to wear many hats, and have become adept at problem solving.

We now have plans for growth and new tools to roll-out for new hires. This includes new

training for additional personnel needs, that are not just on the water. We see a vast need for employee relationships going forward and are gearing up to meet demand. The current work on the vessels is not for everyone, and nor can it be. So we have many avenues for participation in the industry coming up.

PES: Do you interview and vet everyone before placing them? It's not a job that's suitable for everyone is it?

TF: In our experience we have mostly taken referrals for positions from current recruits. Which is great, because when someone refers another to this line of work, typically they already have the required skills.

We gather their credentials and resumes on a 'hire' sheet, then perform the necessary background vetting. Usually, the individuals applying for work already know someone in the industry, or they likely know Paul's family business.

It really is a small intrinsic group of people that work the water, and we feel it really is going to be similar for the wind energy sector. Also, the wind developer requirements are stringent and we work directly with them, adhering to the US Governmental requirements for vessels off the US coast.

PES: And it's not just personnel of course, there is vessel support too isn't there? Tell us a bit about your work here.

TF: Yes. Vessel support in the offshore wind industry in the early years has already shown us the necessity for that service in the long term.

Many developers have officially released their planned time frames and completion dates, so of course we will need trained, vetted and ready personnel to support the larger industry. For instance, at some point electricians, forklift operators and food service personnel will all presumably be needed. In our plans, there is almost no job that won't be needed for this industry.

PES: As a growing industry and one that is expanding quickly all over the world, finding adequate personnel, in terms of numbers and experience, is difficult, isn't it?

TF: In our case, and from where we started up until now, expanding outward as the wind industry grows has always been our plan. We have a unique perspective from local, state, and countrywide needs, which will end up including many individuals from other industries as well.

We will soon roll out a job and employer hiring site, which will serve the growing needs for US offshore wind specifically.

PES: What are some of the other common challenges for the industry do you think?

TF: We have come across some issues with our country's borders and foreign vessels on the water. We continue to be an advocate for



what is known as Jones Act compliant vessels. This is difficult in some cases when there are companies from overseas working so close to our shores, but we see all players in the industry working towards compliance, and expect that will continue.

PES: How can Offshore Wind Farm Support help to overcome these common challenges?

TF: This will come in the form of vetting, training and background checks for everyone we hire, so that they are Jones Act compliant workers, vessels etc., all working together within the framework that exists.

PES: How important do you think it is that those working offshore have local water experience?

TF: For the initial stages of survey work and initial construction I believe FLOs have provided vital information and services to the developers we contract with. To date, our team members have had zero negative interactions with other vessels, fishing gear, boats, buoys, or impeded working boats near survey sites. That means nearly

300,000km of surveyed area was completed without incident. However, we do know of a few negative interactions that may well have been avoided had there been an onboard FLO.

It is presumed that many individuals participating in offshore wind will be from non-local areas of the US, as well as from overseas. So, we see the local talent on the water as an imperative.

PES: How do you see the Offshore Wind industry being able to help fishing communities? There is potential for providing a valuable resource isn't there?

TF: Simply put, we believe everyone can coexist wonderfully in this industry. The wind turbines off Rhode Island, installed in 2016, have created structures the fish just love. A super unintended consequence that gets little notoriety, and the side effect of these structures is awareness that wind energy will benefit everyone if done correctly.

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