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Wave power device gets in water in Oregon

MICHAEL KANELLOS | POST A COMMENT

Finavera Renewables, the Canadian company that wants to harness wind and wave power, has successfully deployed a prototype of its AquaBuoy 2.0 two and a half miles off the coast of Oregon.

Waves push the AquaBuoy up and down in the water. The motion puts pressure on a hydraulic fluid. The pressurized fluid then turns a turbine, which creates electricity. **Wave and tidal power** are primarily in the prototype and experimental stage, but several companies are ramping up prototypes and test vehicles. Marine Current Turbines hopes to put in a tidal turbine in the water off Northern Ireland later this year.

The hydraulic fluid inside the AquaBuoy is seawater, says Finavera CEO Jason Bak, so if one breaks, nasty oils don't escape into the environment. (Finavera is also building [wind farms in Ireland](#).)

The company will study the performance of the half-size prototype and use the field data to design a larger version for commercial deployment. That larger version—which should be capable of generating 250 kilowatts, enough electricity for nearly 100 homes—should come out in 2008. Finavera hopes to be running wave power farms and generating electricity, probably off the northern Pacific coast, in 2010.

The Oregon prototype does not generate power. You would have to hook it by a cable to the grid to generate power. The company mostly wants to study how much pressure can be generated and captured.

The potential for wave power is enormous, say proponents. Water is 800 times denser than air at sea level. Thus, waves and tides can generate more power in less space than wind turbines. Buoys bobbing far offshore are also less visible than solar power farms or turbines.

Skeptics, though, note that installing infrastructure in the sea is fraught with difficulty and is expensive. Neptune's fury is not to be messed with.

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