



ENERGY, WIND, CLIMATE CHANGE

## Chu Singles Out FloDesign's Efficient Wind Turbines at Climate Change Conference

Erik Mellgren 12/18/09

*[Editor's Note: Erik Mellgren, a noted Swedish business and technology journalist who worked with Xconomy as an Innovation Fellow in 2008, sends this article from Stockholm, just as the United Nations climate change conference is winding down in nearby Copenhagen, Denmark.]*

Massachusetts startup [FloDesign Wind Turbine](#) was singled out by U.S. Energy Secretary Stephen Chu as an example of a groundbreaking new energy technology company when he visited United Nations conference on climate change earlier this week.



Chu also challenged his Danish hosts and told the audience that today's wind energy technology simply isn't good enough, if wind power is to have any impact on CO2 emissions. Denmark may be the world leader in wind energy technology at present, but the United States will take over the leadership in the future, Chu said.

He presented his vision of the next generation of wind turbines and said that they needed to be highly efficient, ultra compact, and low in cost. He then pointed to the Wilbraham, MA, company FloDesign and its turbines, which differ radically from today's ordinary propeller-like windmills. The company's design looks a bit like a jet engine, with a multi-bladed turbine enclosed in a shroud.

FloDesign was one of 37 companies across the United States, and six in Massachusetts, to [win R&D grants through the Energy Department's ARPA-E competition](#) in October; it will receive \$8.3 million.

The Danish wind energy community has already reacted to Dr Chu's comment, according to [an article in the engineering magazine \*Ingeniøren\*](#). The article quotes Flemming Rasmussen, researcher at the prestigious Risø Institute. He says that even though the FloDesign concept may give a higher efficiency, it will probably not be competitive against today's traditional designs, the reason being that the new design requires far more material in its construction.

*Erik Mellgren is a Swedish journalist who worked for Xconomy Boston in 2008 as part of the Stanford Innovation Journalism Fellowship program. His real job is with Ny Teknik, a leading technology and innovation magazine in Sweden, but he loved seeing the Red Sox at Fenway.*