

Wave Energy Conversion Plant

Field of the Invention

5 The present invention relates to a wave energy conversion plant and more particularly to a structure placed in a body of water such as a sea, an ocean or the like which converts wave energy and motion into electricity.

Background of the Invention

15 Wave energy is known as one of the greatest sources of renewable energy that could be exploited to generate electricity. The progressive motion of the wave could be translated for continuous electricity supply. There are different solutions in generating electricity from waves which vary on different configurations.

20 Generally, wave energy conversion plant that is placed in the sea or ocean may be subject to ferocious wave conditions and powerful forces such as storm and rain. For a wave energy conversion plant to be both commercially and physically viable, it must be able to withstand these forces while at the same time protecting its energy conversion mechanisms from being affected.

25 It is an object in the present invention to provide a structure that could meet the above requirements by utilising both wave length and wave width in the most efficient way.

Summary of the Invention

According to the present invention, a structure placed in a body of water such as a sea, an ocean or the like for converting wave energy and/or motion into electricity comprises a floating body resting in the water to float and support the structure. The floating body comprises double layered hulls having a bottom hull and side hulls for water ballast. The hulls are integrated to form an open ended maw having open ends to allow waves to pass through the maw from one end to the other end of the structure. A plurality of pontoons is provided within the maw to allow the pontoons to be pushed by the passing waves within the maw. By having the pontoons inside the maw, the pontoons are protected from being affected by the impact of side thrusts from rogue waves.

The bottom hull has a very broad flat surface to act as a giant damper to stabilise the structure which prevents the structure from being carried away or moved and undulate up and down with wave motion.

A platform is provided on top of the structure to house and hold a plurality of energy conversion systems. Wave energy conversion mechanisms cooperate with the energy conversion system to convert wave energy or motion into electricity. The wave energy conversion mechanism can be referred to, but not limited to as a mechanism which converts and transfers a translational motion of the wave into a reciprocal motion. The energy conversion systems can be referred to, but not limited to a system that converts the reciprocal motion and generates electricity .

The pontoons are individually pivoted about a fixed point located between aft and fore sections of the pontoon to allow a continuous rocking movement when being pushed by waves. The crest of oncoming waves will lift up the bow of the pontoon while simultaneously the stern of the pontoon will sink down into the trough of preceding waves. This is the reason for the pontoon length to be half the wave crest to crest distance. As the crest travels on towards the stern to lift it up, the bow will sink into the oncoming trough. The next oncoming crest will lift up the bow again. This cycle will take about fifteen seconds or so.

According to the present invention, when the pontoons rock about the pivot, a translational motion of the pontoons are transferred into a reciprocal or rotary motion by a crank mechanism that would push a piston of a hydraulic ram pump up and down. At least two crank mechanisms are provided between the fixed pivot so that reciprocal motion alternate between the crank mechanisms.

Hydraulic system is a system of choice to convert sea wave energy into electricity because the system provides a clean, neat and efficient energy conversion system. The surges developed in the system are evened out by using a pressure accumulator which results in a controlled speed and torque at a generating set.

The potential energy in a sea or an ocean wave is calculated by the following formula:

$$\text{Power / meter width wave front} = K \times h^2 \times t$$

Where K is a constant of 0.5; h is the wave height on meters (measured from crest to trough); and t is the period from crest to crest in seconds.

In order to produce as much electricity as possible, a plurality of pontoons is provided within the maw. The pontoons is configured to have wide and flat surface at the bottom to capture or absorb as much power of waves that push the pontoons

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Accordingly, the frontal aspect of each pontoon must be presented at right angles to the onslaught of energy-laden waves. The length of the pontoon must not be more than half the distance between wave crests. The fore and aft sections of each pontoon are preferably of equal length and
10 weight so that the pontoons would easily return to its equilibrium position.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The present invention will now be described by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

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Fig. 1 is a front view of a structure placed in a body of water such as sea for converting waves into electricity with some of wave energy conversion mechanisms shown mounted to it.

10 Fig. 2 is a side view of the wave energy conversion mechanisms with pontoons being pushed by passing waves.

Fig.3 is a side view of the wave energy conversion mechanism being immobilised with locking mechanism.

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Fig. 4a is the A-A cross-section view of Fig. 3 showing the arrangement wave energy conversion mechanisms.

20 Fig. 4b is the B-B cross-section view of Fig. 3 showing the arrangement of holding members which hold a pontoon.

Fig. 5 is the plan view of the structure showing an energy conversion system connected to the wave energy conversion mechanism, and facilities provided on the structure.

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Fig. 6 is the C-C cross-section view of Fig. 1 showing the arrangement of the pontoons and flow profile of water passing through the maw viewed from the bottom.

Fig. 7 is the C-C cross-section view of Fig. 1 showing the structure is equipped with funnel extensions.

Detailed Description of the Invention

The present invention relates to a wave energy conversion plant and more particularly to a structure placed in a body of water such as a sea or an ocean or the like. The structure has a plurality of wave energy conversion systems and mechanisms mounted on it to convert wave energy and motion into electricity.

Various modifications to the preferred embodiment and the principles and features described herein will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art. Thus, the present invention is not intended to be limited to the embodiments shown but to be accorded the widest scope consistent with the principles and features describe herein.

Referring first to Fig. 1, there is shown a front view of a structure placed in a body of water for converting waves into electricity with a number of wave energy conversion mechanisms (105) mounted to a platform (101). The structure comprises floating body resting in the water to float and support the structure in the water. The floating body comprises double layered hulls having a bottom hull (109) and side hulls (107) for water ballast.

The bottom hull and the side hulls form an open ended maw (113). An opening is provided at each end of the maw to allow waves to pass through. The maw (113) has a U-shaped cross section wherein the vertical side hulls (107) extending downwardly from the platform at the top of the structure integrally join the horizontal bottom hull (109) at the bottom of the structure.

A plurality of pontoons are provided inside the maw to be pushed by waves passing through the maw. Fixed holding members are provided to hold the pontoons in place so that the pontoons hung within the maw. The waves and water enter the open end at one side and leave the maw at the other open end at the other side.

The bottom hull (109) has a very broad flat surface to act as a giant damper essentially to stabilise the structure such that it prevents the structure from being carried away or moved and undulate up and down with the motion of waves. With the water ballast facilities, the pontoons are maintained to be always at water surface (117). According to the present invention, the structure must not be anchored solidly to the sea or the ocean bed but must float and rise and fall with tides.

The platform comprises a multiple decks having an upper deck (101) and a lower deck (103) is provided to house and hold a plurality of energy conversion systems. Each system is directly connected with the wave energy mechanism to generate electricity.

As shown in Fig. 2, a plurality of pontoons is attached to wave energy conversion mechanisms (105). The pontoons (201) are individually pivoted at a fixed point located between aft and fore sections of the pontoon to allow a continuous rocking movement when being pushed by a series of oncoming wave crests. Firstly, the bow is pushed up (211) while at the same time the stern goes down (209), then as the wave crest moves towards the stern, the stern will be lifted up while the bow is going down. This fore and aft rocking is repeated endlessly, averaging one cycle every fifteen seconds or so. At least one holding member (207) is provided to hold the pontoon in place such that the pontoon is always at the water surface.

When the pontoon (201) rocks about the pivot, the translational motion of the pontoons is transferred into a reciprocating or rotary motion by a crank mechanism (204) that would push a piston (203b) of a hydraulic ram pump up and down. At least two crank mechanisms (204) are provided fore and aft
5 between the fixed pivots so that the reciprocating motion alternates between the crank mechanisms (204). In this way, the rocking motion of the pontoon (201) is effectively utilised.

A hydraulic system is a system of choice in generating the electricity
10 because the system provides a clean, neat and efficient energy conversion system such that the hydraulic surges are evened out by use of a pressure accumulator which result in a controlled speed and torque for electricity to be generated.

15 The length of the pontoon must not be more than half the distance between wave crests. The fore and aft sections of each pontoon are preferably of equal length and weight so that the pontoons would easily return to its equilibrium position.

20 As shown in Fig. 2, the length of the pontoon is half of the distance between two successive crests (211). When waves rush through the maw from bow to stern, and the pontoon bow is pushed up by crest, the stern will sink into the trough of the preceding wave. Thus there will be a continuous, alternating fore/aft rocking movement of each pontoon about the fixed pivot,
25 which, by computing the mechanical advantage of the lever action of half the pontoon length being pushed up while attached to a fixed pivot, a tremendous amount of hydraulic power will be transferred to the hydraulic pump rams resisting this pushing motion. Most of the wave power is used to overcome the resistance of the hydraulic pump ram.

The pontoon has a wide and flat bottom surface in order to capture as much of the wave energy as possible. Further, the frontal aspect of each pontoon must be presented at right angles to the onslaught of energy-laden waves. The bow of the pontoon is configured to have a slanted surface (301).

5 Further, a barrier (205) is provided to protect the holding member and the mechanisms from rogue waves.

For servicing purposes, the pontoons are configured to be immobilised. The pontoons are locked by providing fixed pillars (304) to receive a locking arm (303) as shown in Fig. 3. During servicing, the locking arms are deployed from the platform to interlock the pontoon. The locking arm is further provided with a pillar that is extendable from the locking arm to interlock pontoon which are distanced apart by a longer holding member. The lower deck is distanced apart from the upper deck to allow person to walk on it and access the wave energy conversion mechanisms and the energy conversion systems.

Fig. 4a is the front view of the pontoon showing the arrangement of wave energy conversion mechanisms on the pontoon. In order to have a series of reciprocating motion which in turn generating electricity, a plurality of wave energy conversion mechanisms is provided over the pontoon. A shown in Fig. 4b, a pair of holding members is provided to hold a pontoon.

As shown in Fig. 5 the upper deck (101) is an open ended area. The area is provided with a helipad (507), store (511), areas for crane to be positioned (513), electrical substation (515), and crew station (509). The energy conversion system comprising a pressure accumulator (501), high pressure hydraulic line (500), electrical generator (502), hydraulic motor (503), low pressure hydraulic line (506) oil cooler (504) and, oil tank (505).

The system are mounted within the space provided between the upper and lower decks. Umbilical cords are provided to transfer the generated electricity from the electrical substation (515) to a land station.

5 A plurality of pontoons is provided within the maw (113) to utilise the passing waves in the maw. More pontoons mean more reciprocating motion could be produced and transferred and thus more electricity could be generated. The pontoons are arranged to effectively utilise the waves and water flow profile (601) entering the first open end (613a) and leaving second
10 open end (613b). As shown in Fig. 6 the pontoons are arranged in pair wherein the pairs are positioned in series parallel to each other. The subsequent series preferably has more or less pairs than the first series. As shown in Fig. 6, the first series has more pairs of pontoons than the second series while the second series has less pairs than the third series.

15 Funnel extensions are provided at the front open end (613a) to gather more frontal waves that allow more powerful waves entering the maw (113) as shown in Fig. 7.

Claims

1. A structure placed on a body of water such as a sea or an ocean for converting wave energy into electricity comprising:

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a floating body supporting the structure and forming a maw ;

a plurality of wave energy conversion mechanisms to transfer wave motion into a continuous reciprocal motion;

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a plurality of energy conversion systems cooperating with wave energy mechanisms to generate electricity; and

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a platform to house the wave energy conversion mechanisms and energy conversion systems in place.

2. A structure according to Claim 1 wherein the floating body further comprising

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double layered hulls having a bottom hull (109) and side hulls (107) for water ballast wherein the side hulls extending downwardly from the platform (101,103) and integrally join the bottom hull to form the maw with a U-shaped cross section.

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3. A structure according to Claim 2 wherein the bottom hull has a broad flat surfaces to dampen the structure against waves motion.

4. A structure according to Claim 2 wherein the maw has an opening at one end and an opening at the other end to allow water to flow into and through the maw.
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5. A structure according to Claim 1 wherein the wave energy conversion mechanisms comprise crank mechanisms and pontoons moveable with waves
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6. A structure according to Claim 4 wherein the pontoons rock up and down about a pivot when pushed by the waves.
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7. A structure according to Claim 1 wherein the platform comprising a multiple decks having an upper deck and a lower deck.
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8. A structure according to Claim 2 wherein the water ballast in the hulls (109, 107) levelling the structure so that the pontoons always in contact with water surface.
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9. A structure according to Claim 1 wherein the energy conversion systems comprising high pressure and low pressure hydraulic lines (500, 506), electrical generator (502), hydraulic motor (503), pressure accumulator (501), oil tank (505) and oil cooler (504).

10. A structure according to Claim 5 wherein the energy conversion systems are mounted within the space provided between the upper and lower decks.

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11. A structure according to Claim 1 wherein the platform having an upper deck (101) to provide an area for helipad (507), cranes, store room (511), crew station (509) and electrical substation (515) for transferring electricity to land and lower deck (103) to allow crew to walk and access the wave energy conversion mechanism (105).

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12. A structure according to Claim 1 wherein electricity generated in the plant is transferred from the electrical substation (515) to land station by umbilical cords.

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13. A structure according to Claim 1 wherein each pontoon (201) is held by at least one holding member (207) which extends from the platform (101, 103) and pivoted at the midpoint of the pontoon (201) to allow the pontoon (201) to move freely with waves (209, 211) and cooperated with at least one crank mechanism (204).

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14. A structure according to Claim 9 wherein the crank mechanism push a piston of a hydraulic pump ram up and down.

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- 15.A structure according to Claim 1 wherein the reciprocal motion alternates between the aft and fore of the pontoons.
- 5 16.A structure according to Claim 1 wherein the pontoon (201) having a flat bottom surface and slanted surface (301) at bow of the pontoon to face wave crest (211).
- 10 17.A structure according to Claim 1 wherein the pontoon (201) having a water barrier (205) shielding the holding member (207) and the wave energy conversion mechanisms (105) from being affected by the impact of rogue waves.
- 15 18.A structure according to Claim 1 wherein the structure is provided with funnel extensions (701) to allow wave to travel from a wide section to a narrow section before entering the maw (113).
- 20 19.A structure according to Claim 1 wherein the platform is provided with a locking arm is provided on top of aft and fore section of the pontoon to immobilise the pontoon during servicing.
- 25 20.A structure according to Claim 1 wherein the locking arm is further provided with a pillar extendable from the locking arm to interlock the pontoons.

21. A method for converting wave energy into electricity comprising :

floating a structure in a body of water such as a sea, an ocean
or the like,

forming a maw (113) in the structure with open ends to allow
water and waves to pass through;

converting and transferring waves motion into reciprocal motion
by placing mechanisms in the maw; and

levelling the structure to allow the mechanisms to be pushed by
the passing waves in the maw.

22. A method according to Claim 21 wherein the floating of the structure is
by using a double layered hulls comprising a bottom hull and side
hulls.

23. A method according to Claim 21 wherein the forming of the maw is
defined by at least two vertical side hulls extending downwardly to
integrally join a horizontal bottom hull to create a U-shaped cross
section.

24. A method according to Claim 21 wherein the converting and
transferring of waves motion into reciprocal motion are by allowing

pontoons to move freely with waves and connecting the pontoons with crank mechanisms.

5 25. A method according to Claims 24 wherein the levelling of the structure is by ballasting water into and from the double layered hulls.

10 26. A method according to Claim 24 wherein the movement of the pontoon is about a pivot rocking up and down when being pushed by passing waves in the maw.

15 27. A method according to Claim 24 wherein the reciprocal motion push a piston of hydraulic pump ram up and down to generate electricity.