

# Cape ocean energy targeted

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Cape Cod's congressman is co-sponsoring a bill to help states and the federal government decide where to place renewable energy projects in offshore waters.

Democrat William Delahunt, whose district runs from Quincy to the Cape and Islands, has signed onto legislation that would amend the 1972 Coastal Zone Management Act to give grants to states that work cooperatively with federal agencies on surveys of coastal waters.

The bill was introduced Tuesday by Rep. Lois Capps, D-Calif.

The legislation could affect how quickly large renewable energy projects proposed for the waters off the coast of the Cape and Islands get approved, although it appears it will have little effect on the Cape Wind proposal for Nantucket Sound.

Delahunt has been a vocal opponent of the way that the proposed wind farm there has moved forward while planning and rules for other offshore renewable energy projects have stalled.

Although the current zoning legislation "comes out" of the Cape Wind debate, the Coastal State Renewable Energy Promotion Act "stands on its own" and is not directed at the local project, Delahunt's chief of staff, Mark Forest, said yesterday.

Similar legislation was unsuccessful last year, but the attitude in Washington toward ocean planning has since changed, Forest said.

The Bush administration was opposed to predesignating suitable sites for offshore renewable energy projects, Forest said. And, when there was an attempt to renew the management act last year, Republicans tried to attach measures to increase offshore oil drilling, he said.

"This administration is more in sync with what we're doing and with what other states are doing," said Forest, citing comments by Interior Secretary Ken Salazar.

Delahunt has been pushing for ocean zoning since 2002, a year after the Cape Wind's plan to build 130 wind turbines in the sound was first proposed, Forest said.

Cape Wind spokesman Mark Rodgers said the company was reviewing the bill and did not have any immediate comment.

The bill would not repeal or supersede the existing authority of any federal agency, according to its language.

The federal Minerals Management Service (MMS) — a division of the Interior Department — was given authority over offshore alternative energy projects in 2005. Last week, Salazar announced that a dispute between the agency and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) over who could

authorize projects had been settled. MMS will have the primary responsibility for wind energy projects, and FERC will be in charge of wave and current energy projects, based on a memorandum of understanding that is being finalized by the two agencies.

Another section of the bill Delahunt is co-sponsoring indicates that areas identified as suitable for potential renewable energy development will get priority from federal agencies "for siting, licensing, leasing or permitting of renewable energy facilities."

There are at least two other large projects proposed for federal waters off Massachusetts. Blue H USA LLC wants to build a floating wind farm about 23 miles southwest of Martha's Vineyard. Grays Harbor Ocean Energy Co. LLC has applied for preliminary federal permits to gather data on seven sites around the country, including one 10 to 20 miles south of Nantucket. Grays Harbor's design includes a wind turbine on top of a platform that has wave energy-generation technology.

Burton Hamner, president of Grays Harbor, said that while he supports the coastal survey bill, the \$1 million in annual grants it provides is not enough. A survey of 100 square miles would cost an estimated \$5 million, Hamner said.

"We have identified over 1,000 square miles of space (off Massachusetts) that is potentially capable for offshore renewable energy projects," he said.

But Hamner was happy about the apparent agreement on which federal agencies would review which projects..

On Tuesday, Massachusetts Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Ian Bowles called the new legislation "terrific" when asked about it during testimony before Congress on oceans planning and energy development on the Outer Continental Shelf.

He said in a statement yesterday the grants would help Massachusetts plan for offshore renewable energy projects in ways that protect the environment.

## **Coastal state renewable energy promotion act grants**

Grants would be funded through the U.S. Department of Commerce and used for the following: hydrographic and bathymetric surveys; oceanographic observations and measurements of physical ocean environment; and surveys of sensitive marine ecosystems or other areas with important conservation, recreational, ecological, historic or aesthetic values.

Grants would also support the identification of existing marine uses in the Outer Continental Shelf and potential conflicts, as well as an inventory of onshore and offshore infrastructure capable of supporting renewable energy development.