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## FAA's not ready to buy the farm



### Written by Patriot Staff

The Federal Aviation Administration is saying "not yet" on the proposed wind farm project for Nantucket Sound, issuing a "Notice of Presumed Hazard" Feb 13.

"Initial findings of this study indicate that the structure as described exceeds obstruction standards and/or would have an adverse physical or electromagnetic interference effect upon navigable airspace or air navigation facilities," the FAA notice issued Feb. 13 reads. "Pending resolution of the issues described below, the structure is presumed to be a hazard to air navigation."

As a "presumed" hazard, Cape Wind will have the opportunity to show the project does not exceed FAA thresholds. The company has indicated it believes it will be able to do that in the coming weeks. The notice requires an attempt at resolving the issues in the 60 days or the FAA review process would need to be restarted to overturn the determination.

There are three air traffic control radar installations covering the affected area, North Truro, Otis and Nantucket. "Wind turbines can present problems for primary (search) and secondary (beacon) radar coverage. Wind turbine towers may provide line-of-sight (LOS) shielding issues and beam distortion. Rotating wind turbines that are within line of sight of a search radar system provide unwanted target returns or 'clutter,'" the notice reads.

According to the Notice, FAA studied the location of each of the 130 turbines and found that each represented "an obstruction and/or as having an adverse effect on the use of air navigation facilities or navigable airspace."

The FAA indicated that the installation at Otis is the most vulnerable to the effects of wind turbines.

"The analog ASR-8 located at [Otis] has limited capabilities to resolve the effects of clutter caused by multiple wind turbines within a confined area. Although changes made within the ASR-8 can reduce clutter, these changes also adversely impact detection of aircraft," the notice reads.

There are impacts for all three installations, but the FAA does suggest Cape Wind can work to resolve potential radar conflicts by paying for upgrades at the installations prior to construction. The FAA also indicates that if the suggested remedies don't work after the wind farm is operational, the turbines would have to be "immobilized."

Opponents of the wind farm were buoyed by the notice.

"Cape Wind is clearly within the line of site of the three critical ATC radar systems, and world experience has shown that there is no effective mitigation for this level of interference," the Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound said in a press release Friday afternoon.

Cape Wind's brightest green light to date was the positive federal Minerals Management Service Final Environmental Impact Statement issued in January. The comment period for that is due to end Feb. 17, but opposition groups have asked that it be extended.

In addition, the Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management office issued determinations that the project is consistent with its regulations.

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