

EDITORIAL PAGE

No surprise in exercise of power

The lengthy and lively debate over the proposed Cape Wind project continues to give us a lesson in power of a different sort and how it makes people behave.

The latest example of this comes in the attempt by U.S. Rep. Don Young, a Republican from Alaska, to stop the Cape Wind project by inserting an amendment into a Coast Guard appropriation bill that would ban all windmills within 1 1/2 miles of shipping lanes. The Cape Wind project would be within a mile of a ferry route if built as proposed.

It is unlikely that Rep. Young woke up one morning and decided that he needed

to do something about the Cape Wind project. A far more likely scenario is that a lobbyist working for those who oppose the project was able to convince him to offer the amendment during a closed-door session of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, of which he is chairman. Convincing him probably wasn't too difficult because Young has been a friend of big oil for decades and big oil doesn't care much for things like wind farms.

While Young's amendment came as a surprise to many outside the inner circle of wind farm supporters and opponents,

in a larger sense it should come as no surprise.

As long as there is no plan to zone our oceans and say specifically what we as a society want and don't want, the efforts to site wind farms and liquefied natural gas terminals will be left up to industry and eventually wind up in the courts.

At the federal level, the Bush administration is not likely to step in and offer a clear-cut plan for ocean zoning, preferring as it does to let big business set the agenda.

The Minerals Management Service, which is reviewing the Cape Wind pro-

posal, is also attempting to create guidelines for licensing the use of the oceans. State Sen. Robert O'Leary, D-Barnstable, has taken a step toward ocean zoning by proposing legislation that would at least create a planning process for state waters. But his bill exempts projects already proposed, so the Cape Wind project would be unaffected by any regulations that might result.

Without a plan to zone our oceans, struggles such as the one we are witnessing over the Cape Wind proposal are going to be inevitable.