

Senators opposing bid to limit wind farms

■ Lawmakers reportedly show 'broad opposition' to Rep. Young's 1.5-mile prohibition near shipping lanes.

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A Capitol Hill amendment that would likely kill the Nantucket Sound wind farm has met with stiff opposition from Senate leaders behind closed doors, according to Washington sources.

The provision, tucked into an \$8.7 billion Coast Guard authorization bill by U.S. Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska, would ban wind turbines within 1½ miles of shipping and ferry lanes nationwide.

While the so-called Young amendment has support from House members of a conference committee on the Coast Guard legislation, Senate conferees expressed concerns during the first closed-door meeting on the proposal.

"There was definitely broad Senate opposition to the concept of a national 1.5-mile prohibition," said Andy Davis, spokesman for the Democratic members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Technology.

With no public scrutiny over the debate of the proposed amendment, its fate remains uncertain. Even congressional staff members familiar with the proceedings say it's uncertain when, or even if, another



Rep. Don Young

Amendment inserted in Coast Guard bill

Please see **WIND FARMS /A-6**

CCTIMES - 3/8/2006

Wind farms: Young opposed

continued from A-1

conference committee hearing on the proposal will take place.

The amendment, if approved, would likely doom Cape Wind Associates' plan to build 130 wind turbines on Nantucket Sound since the developer would have to remove many of the turbines. While they have released no financial analysis on the impact of the Young amendment, company officials say the project would not work economically if the Alaska congressman's proposal is adopted.

In the meantime, the company is waiting to hear what Congress decides.

"We're still sitting tight to see how this is going to break," said Mark Rodgers, spokesman for Cape Wind Associates. "We're kind of in a holding pattern."

A spokesman for Young, the third-ranking Republican in the House, could not be reached for comment yesterday.

With the exception of a letter he sent to congressional colleagues on Feb. 15, Young has

said little in public about his proposed wind farm restriction. In the letter, he urged lawmakers to support the 1½-mile buffer because of concern that turbines could affect navigational safety and marine radar.

Young introduced the provision to the conference committee, which is closed to the public, even though it did not appear in either the Senate or House versions of the Coast Guard bill. The amendment must be approved by a majority of conferees before it can be released for a full vote in the House and Senate.

According to Senate sources, there had been hopes a compromise could be reached so the Coast Guard bill could proceed without jeopardizing the future of the offshore wind power industry in the United States.

One proposed compromise, according to numerous sources, was limiting the 1½-mile restriction to only the Nantucket Sound project. That suggestion, however, was opposed by several conferees, according to Davis.

"It just didn't go anywhere," he said.

Opponents of the Cape Wind project call the restriction of turbines near shipping lanes a common sense policy.

Charles Vinick, CEO of the Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound, said restricting the Nantucket Sound wind farm is clearly necessary because of busy shipping and ferry routes nearby. The Alliance has pushed for the Young amendment.

"Radar (concern) has come into the discussion at the highest levels ... and it should," Vinick said. "It's why you have Hy-Line Cruises, and the Steamship Authority and fishermen opposed to this. For them, this is not a political issue."

The Coast Guard, which is responsible for enforcing safety on Nantucket Sound, has been critical of the Young amendment, urging instead that the agency review each wind farm on a case-by-case basis.

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