

Koch's lobbyists could derail Cape Wind

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As federal lawmakers prepare to vote on legislation that could doom the Nantucket Sound wind farm, plenty of eyes are watching closely.

Take, for instance, Bill Koch, the Osterville billionaire and wind farm opponent whose company paid a lobbying firm \$60,000 last year to influence, in part, the Coast Guard bill that could kill the

wind farm, according to recent lobbying reports.

Koch, 65, is also co-chairman of the Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound, the well-financed group leading opposition to the project.

Some wind farm supporters suggest the work of Koch's lobbyists likely spurred a backdoor amendment to the Coast Guard bill that would ban wind turbines within 1½ miles of shipping lanes – and doom

Cape Wind Associates' Nantucket Sound turbines.

But a spokesman for the Oxbow Group, Koch's energy conglomerate, insists the lobbying efforts were not done on behalf of the Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound. And the lobbying was not just about Cape Wind, said Koch spokesman Brad Goldstein.

The primary business of Oxbow, which generates annual sales of \$1 billion, is

mining and marketing energy and bulk commodities such as coal, natural gas, petroleum and electric power generation.

Koch opposes Cape Wind's plan to build 130 wind turbines in Nantucket Sound – in large part, he has said, because he doesn't want to look at them.

Oxbow has its own reasons to oppose

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Bill Koch

Osterville billionaire paid lobbying firm to influence Coast Guard bill.

Koch: Lobbying efforts could doom Cape wind farm

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offshore wind farms, Goldstein said. The company has port and shipping interests around the United States - including in California and Texas. The company doesn't want freighters to be threatened by offshore turbines, according to Goldstein.

"To assume this is done to spite (Cape Wind president) Jim Gordon is pretty silly," he said. "Jim Gordon has portrayed it as an anti-wind bill. It's not an anti-wind bill. It'll affect Jim Gordon. ... That's Jim Gordon's issue. He shouldn't have put his windmills so close to shore."

Koch, a well-known yachtsman and art collector who lives in Florida, owns an estate on Oyster Harbors overlooking Nantucket Sound.

Cape Wind spokesman Mark Rodgers said the lobbying reports make clear that Koch's energy company is trying to influence legislation that could derail the Nantucket Sound project.

"It appears, at the end of the day, there are fossil fuel interests trying to stop a renewable energy project," Rodgers said.

The wind farm would stop in its tracks, he said, if the Coast Guard bill amendment being debated by a congressional conference committee is approved. Rodgers added the project would have to be scaled back and would no longer be economically viable.

The amendment, which restricts wind turbines near

shipping lanes, was inserted into the \$8.7 billion Coast Guard authorization bill by U.S. Rep. Don Young, an influential Alaska Republican who chairs the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

Last year, Koch's Oxbow Group hired the lobbying firm U.S. Strategies to work on a number of energy-related issues - including those related to coal extraction and oil drilling.

Oxbow also farmed out some lobbying work to Kessler and

Associates for "wind project advocacy," according to federal records. One of the registered lobbyists for that group is Billy Lee Evans, a Georgia Democrat who served in the U.S. House from 1977 to 1983.

Goldstein said Oxbow's lobbyists did not write the so-called Young amendment. But he said company leaders, including Koch, support the amendment's navigational restrictions on wind farms.

Alliance officials have called

the amendment smart policy, but say their own lobbyists have had nothing to do with Young's proposal.

They also say Koch's lobbying efforts through Oxbow had nothing to do with his role as the Alliance's co-chairman. Though, they're not complaining. "We can use all the assistance we can get to assure the amendment is passed," said Ernie Corrigan, an Alliance spokesman.

Koch's spokesman said

Oxbow has done nothing improper, adding both sides in the wind farm debate have spent money to affect federal legislation.

Through the first half of 2005, the Alliance had paid more than \$840,000 to four lobbying firms. Cape Wind, meanwhile, spent \$340,000 on two lobbying shops.

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