

Promote wind within national policy

By EDWARD M. KENNEDY

Three years ago, I wrote in the Cape Cod Times that we need to promote wind energy through a comprehensive national policy that applies to all wind projects on the Outer Continental Shelf. I still believe that today.

I also believe that wind energy has a strong future in our country. There is a broad bipartisan consensus to encourage alternative energy sources, and I support substantial state and federal tax incentives for wind energy development.

Along with those incentives, however, offshore developments for alternative energy should be subject to uniform standards of review that include the best interests of the states, businesses and communities that will be directly affected by siting decisions. That kind of review - with uniform standards - has not happened with the proposed Cape Wind development.

Instead, a private developer unilaterally selected the site and, in the energy bill passed by Congress last year, the Cape Wind project received specific exemptions from the new national offshore wind development policy.

Under that law, the proposed Cape Wind site in Nantucket Sound is categorically exempted from the competitive bidding policy that will

apply to all future proposed sites. In addition, as the Department of Interior develops the national policy, Cape Wind cannot be required to resubmit any documents or seek renewal of any preliminary approvals that were granted before the national policy was in place.

That kind of preferential treatment is unwise for our country, and it's unfair to Massachusetts.



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Serious safety questions are raised by the project. Horseshoe Shoal - the location chosen by the developer - is in the center of commerce and transportation between the Cape Cod mainland and the island communities of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, where year-round residents rely on boat and air

travel. Three airports surround the project site.

Less than a week ago, John T. Griffin, vice chairman of the Barnstable Airport Commission, and Edward Barrett, president of the Massachusetts Fishermen's Partnership, wrote that each year three million people navigate the waters around the 24-square mile proposed project site and nearly 400,000 flights move through its airspace. In their view, erecting such a project in the midst of such a commercially active area that often experiences zero visibility conditions would be "utter

recklessness."

Moreover, the Federal Aviation Administration has recently begun looking into the radar effects of large-scale wind turbines in close proximity to airports. Last month, the FAA designated a wind energy project in Wisconsin a hazard to aviation, and informed U.S. Rep. William Delahunt that recent briefings with United Kingdom Ministry of Defence representatives "seem to confirm our concern of potential interference from wind turbines to our own traffic control radar systems." The FAA is bolstering its reviews of such projects as a result of these briefings and is working closely with a Department of Defense team that is investigating how wind energy development impacts critical military radar systems.

We expect these issues to be addressed with respect to future offshore wind energy development projects governed by the national policy, but Cape Wind received preliminary FAA approval before the agency had begun examining these concerns in such detail.

There are other concerns as well. More than 30 years ago Mas-

sachusetts designated Nantucket Sound as a state ocean sanctuary, and both state and federal agencies have proposed national maritime sanctuary protection.

The Horseshoe Shoal site is geographically unique, a doughnut-hole of federal property bounded on all sides by state-protected waters. But the ecological health and value of the Nantucket Sound doesn't begin or end at these boundaries.

Project proponents argue either that all these issues will be addressed, or that they are subordinate to the larger goals of the project. I disagree that they should simply be subordinated, and I no longer have any confidence they'll be addressed.

In light of all of these questions, I strongly support the provision in the Coast Guard legislation that will give the Coast Guard commandant and the governor of Massachusetts - not the developer - the final decision over whether this project should be constructed in the middle of the state-designated ocean sanctuary.

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