

# Wind farm's fate dominates Interior hearing on offshore renewable energy policy

By **DAVID SCHOETZ**  
and **KEVIN DENNEHY**  
**STAFF WRITERS**

DEDHAM - It wasn't supposed to be about Cape Wind.

But given the project's contentious history and national profile, there was little chance of that happening.

A federal hearing on pending offshore renewable energy policy last night unfolded into another back-and-forth between supporters of the Nantucket Sound proposal and opponents who criticized the plan for a litany of reasons.

Even as the review of Cape Wind continues, the federal government is crafting an overarching framework for where and how such renewable energy projects should be permitted.

The public hearing last night at the Holiday Inn was not supposed to be about any single site, but nearly everyone among the dozens who testified weighed in specifically on Cape Wind, the 130-turbine proposal that, if built today, would be the nation's first offshore wind farm.

A string of more than 20 project opponents opened the testimony, including several members of the Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound, the well-funded organization trying to kill the proposal.

The group's carefully choreographed comments fit neatly into the three-minute allotments per individual and touched on a range of specific concerns, including impact on fishing, navigation, birds and the region's tourism-based economy.

John O'Brien, speaking for the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, said the project would benefit only Cape Wind developer Jim Gordon.

"There are no free lunches when it comes to electricity generation," O'Brien said. "It's not our backyard.

It's basically our front yard." said Charles Gifford. The Woods Hole, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Steamship Authority port captain reiterated the

boat line's concern that the

turbines will pose a safety

threat to marine traffic in the Sound.

Others raised concerns that Cape Wind would not be subject to the same standards that other offshore renewable projects will face when the federal regulations are completed, something expected by fall of 2007.

Last night's hearing was hosted by the Minerals Management Service, an agency within the Interior Department that last year was granted lead

regulatory authority over offshore renewable energy projects.

Already, MMS oversees the leasing and siting of oil and natural gas platforms on the Outer Continental Shelf.

In an interview before the hearing, Renee Orr, chief of the MMS leasing division, said that Cape Wind, if approved, would ultimately have to comply with the agency's final set of guidelines.

"This is a new animal we are creating," Orr said. "We want to make sure we involve everyone and get the broadest possible input we can."

It was more than two hours before project supporters reached the lectern.

Matt Palmer, executive director of Clean Power Now, a local advocacy group, asked federal officials to also consider the benefits of a project like Cape Wind, including jobs and public health.

He also urged them to act quickly, saying that greenhouse gas concerns need to be a national priority.

David Schoetz can be reached at dschoetz@capecodonline.com. Kevin Dennehy can be reached at kdennehy@capecodonline.com.

(Published: May 26, 2006)

**Copyright © Cape Cod Times. All rights reserved.**