

Cape Wind's new images of its windmills -- now 23 feet taller -- provide a glimpse of what the turbines will look like from land



New computer simulations of Cape Wind provide views of how the project will look from some of the state's favorite vacation spots. Here's a view from Oak Bluffs in Martha's Vineyard. (Photo Simulation/ Cape Wind)

By Beth Daley, Globe Staff | October 15, 2006

The company that wants to build the nation's first offshore wind farm in Nantucket Sound is building the turbines 5 percent taller, re-opening the emotionally charged debate over whether the 130 windmills will spoil the view from some of the state's best-loved vacation spots.

The developer, Cape Wind Associates, has prepared a new set of computer simulations of the proposed wind farm from various vantage points on Cape Cod and the Islands. For many Massachusetts residents, it is their first glimpse of what the turbines will look like.

The Minerals Management Service, the federal agency that ultimately will decide the fate of the farm, is gathering information and should release a draft report on the environmental impact of Cape Wind early

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next year. The public will have an opportunity to comment, and then the agency will make a final decision in early 2008.

From the start in 2001, the effect of the wind farm on scenic views was what bothered its detractors the most, although other concerns have emerged, such as the risk to birds and questions about private profiteering on public lands.

Now Cape Wind Associates wants to increase the height of the turbines by 23 feet -- or 5 percent -- to make the windmills more productive on light wind days. That means each turbine will stand 440 feet above sea level when its tallest blade is pointing straight up.

► **WEB LINK:** [More pictures of how Cape Wind might look from vantage points on the Cape and Islands](#)

The company said the new simulations, which show the windmills as they might look during the day and at night, reflect no discernable difference from the earlier blueprint.

But those opposed to the farm are using the new simulations to illustrate what they say is proof that the energy project will be an industrial eyesore when seen from the pristine shores of Cape Cod. They say the differences from earlier simulations -- some of which have been on Cape Wind's website for several years -- are small. But they are most striking in Edgartown and Oak Bluffs, where residents will be able to make out the turbines far more clearly because of the increased height, opponents say.

“The turbines will transform one of the most scenic vistas in America to an industrial zone,” said Audra Parker of The Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound, the group that has led opposition to the proposed energy facility. She said the views translate into economic loss because “fewer people will come to the Cape” and “that translates into a loss of thousands of jobs and tourism revenue.”

The new simulations show slightly different boundaries for the project, made after a change by the US Department of the Interior that placed some of the planned turbines in state waters. The entire project is now in federal waters. Cape Wind also is proposing to reduce the number of red aviation lights on the turbines from 260 to 57, after the Federal Aviation Administration gave it permission to do so. The company says its opponents are using the new simulations make a tired argument.

“This is what getting three-fourths of the Cape and Islands' electricity from clean renewable energy looks like,” said Mark Rodgers, a spokesman for Cape Wind. He said wind turbines will increase tourism to the region. “To many people they are sleek and elegant and graceful while others don't like the way they look. It's in the eye of the beholder.”

If Cape Wind's simulations are any indication, the view of the wind farm will depend on the vantage point. In Cotuit, the simulations depict four neat rows of turbines on the right side of the simulation and less-organized turbines on the left. The turbines appear to be the most visible in Hyannis Port and Craigville with about 90 percent of the turbines discernible. In Oak Bluffs, residents will be able to make out the shape and color of each of the off-white turbines clearly, though not necessarily the half-dozen or so that are gray. Edgartown

and Nantucket Cliffs' tourists will see toothpick-like structures in the distance.

At night, the reduced lighting makes the proposed farm far less visible. Viewers from Nobska Lighthouse in Falmouth and Oak Bluffs will see what looks like a faint row of holiday lights.

The Cape Wind project has become one of the most contentious political and public issues in the nation. Powerful foes, including US Senator Edward M. Kennedy, whose family's Hyannis Port compound would have a clear view of the farm, and Governor Mitt Romney, have tried to kill the project. Kennedy was behind a failed bid earlier this year to allow the Massachusetts governor the right to veto the proposal.

Other politicians and residents have portrayed the project as a symbol of the need for Massachusetts and the country to embrace renewable power. Massachusetts Audubon has given its preliminary approval to the project.

Until a final decision is made, Cape Wind's supporters and opponents say they will continue to debate the merits of the proposal -- and its views.

``As an artifact, they are beautiful," said Robert Skydell, a supporter of Cape Wind who lives in Chilmark. ``I don't feel they detract from the surrounding area. I'm comforted by the sight of wind turbines . . . when we consider the energy represents, it symbolizes something."

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