



The Cape & Islands Renewable Energy Collaborative

Promoting a sustainable energy future for the Cape and Islands

POSITION STATEMENT

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Contact:

Richard Lawrence
508-457-7679

Supporters of Renewable Energy Jointly Oppose Moratorium on Offshore Projects

We, the undersigned members of the Cape and Islands Renewable Energy Collaborative (CIREC), oppose the calls for a moratorium on any and all renewable energy projects on the outer continental shelf until a new federal review and permitting process is created to specifically address this type of development.

A moratorium would needlessly delay national, regional, state, and local strategies that are attempting to address pressing societal concerns by accelerating the transition to renewable sources of energy. Prospects for energy independence, sustainable economic growth, environmental quality improvement, and climate change mitigation depend on the rate of this transition and on society's progress along other pathways toward a cleaner, more sustainable energy future.

Currently, a legal process exists to permit renewable energy projects sited in federal waters. The Army Corps of Engineers is clearly responsible for permitting structures to be built on the outer continental shelf. In addition, any project proposal must be reviewed and approved by multiple federal, state, and local agencies. The public is given several opportunities for review and comment during the lengthy review process. The system is not conspicuously flawed and an indefinite delay until Congress decides that a clear improvement is appropriate is neither timely nor in the public interest.

The Army Corp's review process includes comprehensive impact assessments to consider and protect the full range of public interests and to mitigate any adverse direct or indirect impacts. All decisions must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Since its enactment on January 1, 1970, NEPA has shaped energy and environmental policy to address the pressing issues facing society, such as the oil price shocks of the 1970s and continuing concerns regarding the protection of air quality, water quality, ecosystem integrity, and public health.

A moratorium would short-circuit the ongoing federal, state, and local review of the project proposed by Cape Wind Associates for Nantucket Sound. This proposed project, and its associated public debate, has sparked efforts to consider the tradeoffs associated with energy supply alternatives while helping illuminate critical environmental, economic, and social issues associated with large-scale renewables development. The data, information, and knowledge being generated by the Cape Wind review process will provide this and other regions with a sound basis for developing renewables in ways that maximize local benefits while minimizing adverse impacts. This information is needed to be able to make informed decisions and policies about this project and others that will surely follow.

It is imperative that our nation makes expeditious progress in reducing its dependence on fossil fuels. Our continued reliance on fossil fuels contributes to decreased national security and economic sustainability; and

increased pollution, health problems, and global warming. Massachusetts, along with several other states, has taken a lead in this endeavor by mandating a minimum percentage of power sold in the Commonwealth to be from new renewable sources, and by setting up the Renewable Energy Trust to financially support this objective. It is CIREC's goal to have the Cape and Islands utilize its locally abundant sources of clean energy to become a net exporter of "green electrons." Local renewable energy projects will improve the environment, protect public health, and encourage sustainable economic growth within Cape & Islands communities.

Offshore wind energy is the most promising source of the sizable amounts of new, renewable energy development needed in New England to meet Massachusetts' and other states' laws, consumer demands, and local and national aspirations for a sustainable energy future. It utilizes proven, fully commercialized technology that is competitive in price to conventional fossil fueled power generation, including the oil fired Canal plant, which generates most of the energy used on the Cape and Islands and is among the top five polluters in the state.

The time is past due for our country to develop a comprehensive plan for the development of renewable energy projects in federal waters. Several European countries have had policies in place for years. Their policies, along with some relevant U.S. legislation (like the Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion Act, the recently created provisions for developing wind farms on public lands, and other federal resource management laws with similar principles and elements) could be used as guidance. Among other things, a new policy should clarify the nature of the property right (lease, right of way, or other) to be conferred upon the developer. In developing a new policy, an opportunity exists to create processes for site selection, competitive bidding, leasing, and royalty payments, in addition to other regulatory provisions, such as are outlined for offshore oil and gas extraction.

We recognize the need for a policy to specifically address renewable energy facilities on the outer continental shelf, but we are confident that the existing review process is sufficient to protect a broad range of public interests and the environment. We believe that a moratorium would be contrary to public interests and that the existing process should continue to be used until a more detailed regulatory framework is created.

The Cape and Islands Renewable Energy Collaborative (CIREC) is dedicated to promoting a sustainable energy future through advocacy, education, and innovation in renewable energy and energy efficiency, seeking to achieve global impact through support for local projects.

The following participants in CIREC, who represent a diverse cross-section of citizens, advocacy groups, businesses and institutions on Cape Cod and the Islands, support this position statement.

Cape & Islands Self-Reliance
Megan Amsler
Executive Director
PO Box 3203
Waquoit, MA 02536
(508) 457-7679

Woods Hole Research Center
George Woodwell
Director
P.O. Box 296
Woods Hole, MA 02543-0296
(508) 540-9900

Wind Management, LLC
Timothy Caffyn
Assistant General Counsel
1 Atlantic Ave.
South Yarmouth, MA 02664
(508) 394-8316

Water Energy & Ecology Information Services
Christopher Powicki
Principal
PO Box 382
Cummaquid, MA 02637
(508) 362-9599

The Conservation Consortium
Brian Braginton-Smith
1 Atlantic Avenue
South Yarmouth, MA 02664
(508) 775-1369

T.J. Design
Tom Wineman
11 Oak Lane
Osterville, MA 02655
(508) 428-5616