

# Cape Wind's fate unclear, even in Obama's hands

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Map shows site of proposed wind farm near Cape Cod

(AP) -- After eight years of review, the future of a controversial wind farm off Cape Cod now rests in what would seem to be friendly hands - an Obama administration that's pledged to make the U.S. "the world's leading exporter of clean energy."

But it's tough to tell if Cape Wind's prospects just got better or worse.

Obama has never mentioned the project while talking publicly about renewable energy, despite his enthusiasm for the topic and the fact Cape Wind would be the nation's first offshore wind farm.

Some Cape Wind advocates have chalked up Obama's silence to respect for the late Sen. Edward Kennedy, an early and influential Obama backer. Kennedy battled the project fiercely, writing Obama of his opposition the month before he died in August from brain cancer.

To add to the uncertainty, Obama's Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, who pledged this month to decide whether to approve Cape Wind by the end of April, has called it "a good project." But two Obama appointees to agencies connected to the project's review have links to its chief opposition, the Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound.

U.S. National Park Service head Jonathan Jarvis is the brother of alliance consultant Destry Jarvis. And Federal Aviation Administration chief Randy Babbitt has worked for the alliance. Both are recused from any decisions involving Cape Wind.

The Obama administration is awaiting the Interior Department's Cape Wind review before taking a position, said Moira Mack, a White House spokeswoman. Mack said the administration "believes that investing in [wind energy](#) - on and offshore - is an important part of the transition to a low-carbon economy and has supported new policies and investments to help realize that goal."

Cape Wind, expected to cost \$1 billion, aims to provide 75 percent of the Cape's electricity with 130 turbines, each about 440 feet tall, erected in Nantucket Sound. Its developers stand to benefit as a major electricity provider to a state aiming to create enough wind power capacity to power 800,000 homes by 2020.

Opponents say the project is a hazard to aviation and wildlife and would mar historic vistas, including the view from the Kennedy compound. They want it moved out of the sound to an alternate site Cape Wind says is not feasible.

Since he took office, Obama has spoken several times about wind energy, including on Earth Day in April, saying wind energy could potentially "generate as much as 20 percent of our [electricity](#) by 2030." He also spoke about "enormous interest in wind projects off the coasts of New Jersey and Delaware."

Barbara Hill of the pro-Cape Wind group Clean Power said she finds Obama's silence on Cape Wind "a bit confusing" because its success is so crucial to future offshore wind projects.

Sue Reid, an attorney with the Conservation Law Foundation and a project proponent, said she believes Obama is simply being careful not to prejudge the project before the approval process ends.

"I think it's a matter of him being very principled and measured, as opposed to that he's made up his mind somehow in opposition to the project," she said.

Though Obama has never mentioned Cape Wind, Salazar told The Associated Press in March that "from what I know of the [Cape Cod](#) wind project, it is a good project."

Kennedy disagreed, believing Cape Wind was a case of special interests being allowed to trump local concerns for private profit. He said his opposition had nothing to do with the view from his home.

On July 8, Kennedy and U.S. Rep. William Delahunt wrote Obama and asked him to postpone any decision until Cape Wind was subjected to new ocean zoning rules still being devised by Obama's national Ocean Policy Task Force.

"These 'rules of the road' should be established first, before any large-scale industrial energy project is approved in any of our coastal waters,"

the letter read.

The task force has since said its rules are "not meant to delay or halt" existing projects, but such projects are expected to take the "goals and principles" of the marine zoning rules into account.

Audra Parker of the Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound said she was hopeful Obama would defer to Kennedy's concerns and honor "Sen. Kennedy's legacy and his deep appreciation for Nantucket Sound."

"Moving the project would certainly do that," Parker said.

In his July letter, Kennedy also asked Obama to direct the task force "to give full consideration to providing protected status for Nantucket Sound," including "possible inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places as a Tribal (sic) Cultural Property."

The sound was ruled eligible for that protection on Jan. 4, when the keeper of the national register, who is under Jonathan Jarvis at the National Park Service, backed a claim by two Wampanoag Indian tribes that the sound was their "Traditional Cultural Property."

The Wampanoag argued the project would interfere with sacred rituals which require an unblocked view of the horizon and would be built on a long-submerged ancestral burial ground. A park service spokesman said Jarvis was not involved in the Wampanoag decision.

That ruling brought the prospect of more delay and prompted Salazar to intervene. If he approves Cape Wind, a few smaller issues would remain, including review by the FAA, headed by Babbitt. He has worked as an alliance consultant on its claims that Cape Wind could interfere with airplane radar signals.

A Department of Transportation spokeswoman said Babbitt has been recused from any involvement in Cape Wind decisions.

Cape Wind spokesman Mark Rodgers said the project will ultimately succeed on its merits, which were validated over years of review. He noted it's the only offshore wind project that could come to fruition during Obama's term.

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