

An Alternative Energy News Source Interview with Cape Wind Spokesman Mark Rodgers

Interviewed by Russell Hasan

Altenews.com

Cape Wind was planning a major renewable energy project, a large wind farm off the coast of Nantucket, Massachusetts to provide power to Cape Cod and the neighboring islands. Everything was going well, until a group of senators including Democrat Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts snuck an amendment into a Coast Guard Bill that would give Governor Romney, who opposes the project, the ability to veto it. We talked to Cape Wind about their fight in Congress, their campaign to save their wind farm, the history of wind power, and the future of American energy.

AENS: Why are Senator Stevens of Alaska and Senator Kennedy of Massachusetts opposed to your wind farm?

CW: In Senator Kennedy's case, most people suppose it has something to do with the location of his residence, which is six miles from the site. The site is closest to land there, and on a clear day he would see a half inch of wind farm off the horizon, the distance of a thumb to an index finger. That is the basis of his opposition, although he talks about other, technical things.

AENS: Is Senator Kennedy being a hypocritical liberal by opposing an environmentalist project just because it is near his house?

CW: Well, I'm not going to answer that as stated, but let's say there is a Senator who says he supports wind power, is calling for more of it, and then there is a wind power project in their area, and they say "no, not here." This calls their support into question. Wind power doesn't get built out of words, it gets built out of steel in the ground in a windy location. Cape Wind could provide three fourths of the electricity demand to Cape Cod and the islands, and there is potential for Senator Kennedy to take a leadership position that would match his rhetorical support, with substantial renewable power delivered to his home, and this would make Massachusetts a global leader in offshore renewable energy. We hope that over time Senator Kennedy will reexamine his position.

AENS: Do you think that the people of Massachusetts support your wind farm?

CW: Well, in independent polling we get three to one or six to one in support for Cape Wind. There is overwhelming support for Cape Wind in Massachusetts.

AENS: Why do you think that the amendment was introduced without any debate?

CW: Well I think our opponents understand that there is strong support in Congress for expanding domestic renewable energy. Bush has talked about this, as well as others in Congress talking about it. This week Congress is reacting to higher oil prices, and there is recognition by our opponents that legislation against Cape Wind can't be done in the

open. They have attempted to pass legislation in conference, with a small number of decision makers. I hope that will not be enough, and when the reauthorization goes to the House and Senate, there will be broad opposition to this language and it will be rejected.

AENS: Which Senators have come out against the amendment and in support of your wind farm, and is there any way for them to remove the amendment at this point?

CW: Senator Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico, Energy Committee ranking Republican Senator Domenici, Senator Kerry here in Massachusetts, Senator Chafee of Rhode Island, and there is a much bigger list, those are the ones that come to mind.

AENS: What actions have you taken to try to save the wind farm?

CW: Well, the most important thing is talking to our friends. We are blessed and fortunate, because there is strong support from environmental organizations, labor organizations, trade organizations, and health organizations. We are working our network, talking about what's going on, coordinating. We had a broad coalition that held a press conference to announce a letter to Congress, and they are meeting with members of Congress. Ultimately this is about more than a company, it is about a new direction this country could take to do energy projects that matter, and deliver clean power. The exciting field of offshore holds potential, there is a lot of support and outrage about backdoor politics by our opponents.

AENS: If the wind farm were to be built, how big would it be and how much electricity would it produce? Also, is it true that it would be the biggest wind power project in the country?

CW: I don't think so, full capacity will be 454 Megawatts, with an average 170 Megawatts. Some large wind farms in California have more than 700 Megawatts, but those may have multiple owners, so for a single owner it is possible that this is on top, it is confusing to answer that question. 170 Megawatts represents 3/4ths of the average electric demand for the area of Cape Cod and the islands. That is 170,000 homes, a substantial amount of power. We use General Electric offshore wind turbines, 130 of them on shallow water, in the Horseshoe Shoal, in Nantucket Sound, and the wind turbines would be six football fields apart from one another on that shoal.

AENS: Whose idea was it to build this wind farm, and why was Cape Cod chosen as the site?

CW: When our company decided to do wind power in New England, we looked at a wind resource map of New England. It was clear that resources are in two places, the mountains of northern New England, or coastal offshore locations, and there is no better location than offshore Cape Cod. Other companies are in the mountains, so we chose the road less traveled, offshore. Europeans have been doing offshore wind dating back to '91, so back in 2000 our engineers met with the Europeans, planning the next generation of wind power, and learned from their experience. We learned that the most important

criteria is strong wind, shallow water, and protection from north Atlantic storm waves. We looked at a map of the New England coast, because we are a Massachusetts-based company, and there was no better site than Horseshoe Shoal, which is sheltered, with shallow water and strong wind. We were aware that windmills on Cape Cod are part of its cultural history, there are store signs with windmills everywhere, every town has a street called Windmill Point, there were one thousand windmills in Cape Cod in the 1700s and 1800s, and they are revered tourist destinations. Then we turned to fossil fuels, but there is a rich tradition of people working with the wind to help power the Cape Cod economy. If you support the wind economy here, you know that we can downsize Arab fossil fuel, Cape Cod has the worst air quality in Massachusetts, it is the area most at risk from global warming, and they stand to gain a lot from clean locally produced energy, keeping with tradition and facing long-term challenges.

AENS: What can people do to help your wind farm?

CW: I would recommend that people go to our website (capewind.org), there are prominent specifics of what you can do. The specifics change as the situation evolves. There are public commentaries on the environmental impact statement. The best thing people can do, regarding the Stevens amendment reauthorization act, is to contact your Senator or member of Congress, and tell them to speak out against the provision when it comes to the floor, or to not vote for the bill that contains that language.