

ENERGY

Cape Wind out of DOD crosshairs ... for now

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INDEPENDENT WRITER

As Cape Wind Associates expected, the U.S. Department of Defense indicated that its 130 wind turbines proposed for Nantucket Sound would not affect the air force early warning missile defense system at Otis Air Force Base.

"Things outside of that zone will not affect PAVE PAWS, so we, by definition don't affect PAVE PAWS," said Cape Wind Communications Director Mark Rodgers. "I have not spoken with DOD, but the quotes on the report in the media are that the DOD says they will not affect the system."

However, the Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound believes that the defense department's mention of Cape Wind's proposed wind farm for Horseshoe Shoal as being so close to the PAVE (Precision Acquisition Vehicle Entry) PAWS (Phased Array Warning System) missile detection system, 1.2 miles, is reason enough to question the radar interference implications of the wind turbines.

PAVE PAWS is used to detect Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles and Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles as part of the Space Surveillance Network that tracks earth satellites and identifies other space objects.

Alliance CEO Charles Vinick said that he and the Alliance are waiting for Congressman Bill Delahunt's analysis of the report and for similar reports from the U.S. Coast Guard and the FAA on radar interference in relation to Cape Wind's project.

"We're trying to make sure we understand all the radar issues," said Vinick. "If you look at the numbers in the DOD

report, they set an offsite zone at 25 kilometers. It turns out [Cape Wind] is in the lower part of the beam."

The electromagnetic beam of the radar signal emanates from the system in a line-of-sight fashion starting at three degrees above the horizon and ascending skyward to 85 degrees above the horizon. At 25 kilometers (15.5 miles) out from the transmitter, the outer limit of the offset zone is 1.2 miles from the nearest wind turbines. The lowest portion of the radar beam at this point is 429 feet off the ground, said Vinick, and Cape Wind's turbines are 440 feet tall.

At 27 kilometers (16.7 miles) from Cape Wind's closest wind turbines, the lowest portion of the beam is 449 feet off the ground, just nine feet above the wind turbines. Vinick said both these distances from the PAVE PAWS radar beam are just too close to ignore in terms of potential for interference.

"Whatever energy benefits this project may provide are far outweighed by the conflicts it imposes on the public's safety," Vinick said in a June 15 Alliance press release. "Radar interference is no longer a theory, but a demonstrated threat confirmed by the DOD that Cape Wind must acknowledge. It is now time for Cape Wind to find a more suitable site for the project."

While the DOD does not specifically say that Cape Wind's project area is outside the PAVE PAWS 25 kilometer offset zone, Rodgers said Cape Wind is more than two kilometers away from the 25km limit of the offset zone.

Cape Wind is awaiting the August release of the Minerals Management Service's draft environmental impact report, which will be followed by local public hearings. ■

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