

# Opinion

## CAPE WIND FORUM

SEND YOUR VIEWS AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: [DON@NANTUCKETINDEPENDENT.COM](mailto:DON@NANTUCKETINDEPENDENT.COM)

### THE SILENCE OF THE ENVIRONMENTALISTS

#### To the editor:

Imagine, if you can, a 252 acre net, 328 feet high and 6.34 miles long, stretched across Nantucket shoals, the bottom edge of which is suspended a mere 89 feet above the water. And further, that the net is always deployed to face the wind.

This, I believe, fairly represents the magnitude of the danger that 130 colossal windmills poses for two million waterfowl that winter in Nantucket waters.

Observations made during fair-weather Christmas bird counts show that most sea ducks would fly harmlessly under the "net." My concern, however, is that these observations cannot be used to describe long flights of these great flocks while avoiding the dangerous extremes of North Atlantic winter storms.

Fundamental bird lore tells us that when birds travel long distances, they fly much higher than usual to achieve the most efficient expenditure of energy.

In summertime, visiting warblers rarely fly more than 50 feet above the ground. Most passerines (such as thrushes, warblers, tanagers and sparrows) migrate at altitudes between 2,500 and 4,000 feet. A hundred summertime bird-counts would not reveal this fact.

How, then, do we explain the silence of the environmentalists, professional and amateur, in the face of the obvious? A silence that sanctions this ill-advised development.

The answer, I'm afraid, probably lies in a new word I discovered the other day: "symbolistics." Just as the Cross is the iconic symbol of Christianity, the windmill is the iconic symbol of the newly green, secular left. It symbolizes the vision of alternative energy, a vision to be brought about by a preferred political system. The loss of an unknown number of little-known seabirds is a small price to pay.

To paraphrase an old misunderstood Russian environmentalist, the loss of a single piping plover is a tragedy, the loss of tens of thousands of sea birds is a statistic, swept away by the tides, political tides.

— Dick Corkish

### A BLIGHT ON THE HORIZON

#### To the editor:

From 1659 until after WWII, when regular plane service to the island came into being, every single person, automobile, brick, nail, can of paint, side of beef, bottle of aspirin, book, can of beer, spool of thread, bulldozer, etc. destined to come to Nantucket Island came by boat across the body of water known as Nantucket Sound. Also, it bore on its surface every fabled Nantucket whaling vessel off to and

returning from the Pacific whaling grounds. Nantucket Sound is an historic site. It is also Nantucket's front yard.

In the warm months, visitors on all types of boats experience the novelty and, for some sailors, the challenge of crossing an open body of water where land disappears and, in the spirit of adventure, one is far removed from commercialism, automobiles, noise, and the pressure of mainland living. At the same time, Nantucket receives hundreds of thousands of dollars from this sound-crossing traffic. One wonders what effect the large proposed acreage of tall windmill towers will have on the many sailing events that take place on this body of water such as the Opera House Regatta or the Figawi race, which have contributed enormously to our island hospital and other charities around the sound area. It is doubtful that the minority of islanders supporting the windmills fully realize how much these events contribute to our economy. How will this proposed commercial blight affect all of those sailors who love to "go down to the sea in ships" to get away from it all? Has anyone seriously considered this? As a sailor I can say that I would forego such an area.

"The Faraway Island" was the name the Indians gave the island. In addition to its unique history and the unusually well preserved character of the old town, this faraway quality has been part of the attraction that many people have felt for Nantucket. In the past it has seemed far removed from the mainland and a welcome escape from the stresses and hubbub of mainland life. But fast ferries and the frequency of short plane flights across the sound have done much to make it seem as if we've moved nearer to the mainland than many of us want to be. Those windmill lights will be plainly seen from many locations at night and the towers themselves will, it seems, be visible not long after passing through the jetties. The mainland creeping up on us destroys some of the mystique and romance of this island and tends to vitiate its interest for many residents and visitors alike.

Windmills are a fine idea but not in our front yard. I urge all those who would like to see Nantucket Sound kept as it always has been, to attend the meeting at the High School on Tuesday, March 11 to demonstrate their opposition.

— Adrienne A. McCalley

### COMMON SENSE, WHERE IS IT?

#### To the editor:

Cape Wind in Nantucket Sound? Everyone we know wants a more economical and cleaner energy source. The location, along with the purpose, needs to be considered to avoid unintended consequences. Cape Wind is proposing to take 25 square miles of Nantucket

Sound from the public at a nominal rate, and use it for private development. Don't support this project because some expert says that it is a green issue, or that it will reduce your electrical bills. Ask yourself some basic questions:

Do you believe this project will have any negative impact on our region? Our strongest attraction is the beauty of the area, both natural and architectural. Cape Wind will bring us a 25 square mile industrial park in our front yard with loads of lights and foghorns. We already have high costs, traffic and parking issues. Vacationers have other choices, but we know why they come here — it is beautiful. Do you think we should tinker with the beauty that we have worked so hard to protect?

Do you believe that there will be no safety issues? How many times do we read that a fisherman, boater or pilot had a problem on or over the sound? Could a helicopter do a search and rescue between 130 windmills that are 40-plus stories high in a storm? Will it affect radar, as has been suggested? What happens to a boat that breaks down? Does it stay in one place like a truck on the side of the road or does it drift — especially in bad weather? These are only a few possible scenarios.

Where are the consultants when they are wrong? Do we want to hear them say, "I am sorry, but I misunderstood the degree of the problem?" All too often, consultants' findings reflect the position of those who pay their bills.

Is there something questionable about a project that cannot get private financing? When the federal government wants to stimulate development and the private market does not see the economic returns, it offers tax subsidies (read, "your money"). The more risk, the more subsidy. When the investor gets his investment back on the front end, he has little incentive to watch the company. Where is the protection for the public benefit? It has already been reported the power will cost 200-300 percent more to produce. Might the wind farm be abandoned in our sound if it is not economically viable? The investor has already gotten his money back.

What happens if this project does not work? Should the project fail, are there sufficient front-end funds escrowed to remove the structures in a timely manner? It has been reported that Cape Wind lobbied to get that requirement removed. On a smaller scale, what happens when a propeller is broken and falls into the sound, or there is a fuel leak from the 40,000-gallon storage tank? Who is responsible for the cleanup? Nantucketers know who cleans up the debris on our shores.

Do you think this project will have no impact on the tax base of our island? The Cape and islands have a resort economy that is based on its natural beauty. On Nantucket, 87 percent of the taxes are paid by second-home owners,

See WIND LETTERS, page 12

## Yea, or nay? What Nantucketers say on wind power in Nantucket Sound:

"It's a fine line. I do believe in looking for alternative energy, but is that the best place? I honestly don't have a dog in the fight. I've looked into a wind turbine in my back yard. I honestly think they're going to be fine unless they break down."

— Joseph Topham,  
residential designer

"Yes, I do support the wind farm. No, I do not support it being privately run. I would rather see it be run by a number of towns on the Cape."

— Brian Chadwick,  
Selectman

"No. They're a menace to navigation for small and large boats."

— Flint Ranney,  
Nantucket's representative  
on the Steamship Authority  
Board of Governors

"No, because of the location. The concept is a good one, but the location should be different. I think basically a land-based system would be a better one than the one in the water. Long-term, I think tidal power has probably much greater promise than some of the other ones that are currently being looked at."

— Dual Macintrye,  
president of the Tom Nevers  
Association

"I'm against it mainly for the birds. Migratory birds will basically be consumed if you have it so close to Nantucket. It's a fine idea, but not for this area."

— Linda Loring,  
founder of the Linda Loring  
Nature Foundation

"I'm kind of back and forth on it. I'm against where it is, but I am for wind power. I'm wondering what it's going to really look like. I think they're [Cape Wind] exaggerating how small it's going to look. I think it's going to look bigger. That particular project doesn't seem to benefit anybody except the developer. It certainly isn't going to help Nantucket."

— Gary Winn,  
developer/real estate broker

"My sense of the wind farm is it could probably find a better location. We obviously need alternative energy supplies, but the site in the sound is not the best site. I think Doug Bennett really had something with the alternative site south of Tuckernuck. That really does intrigue me, that and this tidal power."

— Rick Atherton,  
FinCom chairman