

WHY I SUPPORT THE PROPOSED NANTUCKET SOUND WIND FARM

By the Reverend William Eddy

Along with 25 other people I have just returned from a fact-finding trip to Denmark. Seven miles off the west coast of Denmark, near Blavand and the port city of Esbjerg, lies the world's largest offshore wind farm, Horns Rev. Eighty turbines are able to generate 160 megawatts of electricity. In comparison, Cape Wind's proposal calls for 130 turbines able to generate 420 megawatts.

The North Sea lies before me. I turn through 180 degrees, searching out the waters from north to south. Between the shore and Horns Rev is a thin line of a sand bar that reminds me of the view from the Chatham light. Beyond the waters breaking over the bar thousands and thousands of birds dot the surface of the sea, and long flights of birds move through the air. Horns Rev is located within one of great migratory routes of Europe.

What surprises me, of course, is the actual view of Horns Rev. It seems like a flotilla of tall ships on the distant horizon, and I realize that Horns Rev occupies only a small portion of the horizon, perhaps 20 degrees. I hold my hands before me, thumb to thumb, fingers outstretched. The wind farm is framed within my fingertips. But what I see in total exceeds the full spread of my arms. Horns Rev is smaller than I had thought. Up till then I had imagined that Horns Rev would encompass most of my entire vista. Now I come to understand that the problem with postcards and digital visualizations is that they don't give you the whole picture. It occurs to me that the Cape Wind project has just overcome a major hurdle. Having spent a year and a half studying the proposal, wrestling with its implications, I come to believe that the Nantucket Sound project is absolutely right.

Later, in my talks with the mayor of Blavandshuk and some of the shopkeepers whom I meet, I am startled to hear that they really don't notice the wind farm anymore. What they

do notice, as we do on the Cape in winter, is the arrival of tourists like us – the promise of things to come.

* * * * *

Horns Rev represents the end product of the efforts of thousands of people. VESTAS, the manufacturer of the turbines, is headquartered in Denmark. It is the world's largest producer of wind turbines. We visit two of their plants, one assembling the transmissions and generators that, housed in nacelles, sit atop the towers, the other producing the blades. VESTAS employs more than 8000 people. The factories work round the clock. And for every VESTAS employee, five other Danes are employed in the support industries. The wind industry in Denmark is the third largest contributor to the Danish economy, behind pharmaceuticals and ... LEGOs. Wind energy is a growth industry around the world, and VESTAS is growing by 25% each year. At the present time, Germany is planning on generating more than 27,000 megawatts from the wind, Ireland more than 9000, Sweden 5000, the UK 2000. In the US, just 680. For now.

For the people of southeastern Massachusetts, there are a variety of benefits from wind energy.

Consider the benefits to a port city like New Bedford should a company like VESTAS or GENERAL ELECTRIC locate its wind operations there. Imagine the jobs that will be created for our young people here on the Cape, trained and hired to service and maintain the wind farm.

Clean energy from the wind displaces other sources of energy, especially oil and coal. We know that New England suffers from the output of midwestern power plants. But on Cape Cod and on Martha's Vineyard we have the dirtiest air in Massachusetts, suggesting that our problem is a little closer to home. During the day, the plumes from the Brayton Point and Sandwich power plants are literally sucked into the air rising from the Vineyard and the Cape. Our beautiful national seashore has some of the worst air of any national park in the nation. The wind farm will help to alleviate this situation.

Finally, let us think about the economic benefits to all of us if an entity like the Cape Light Compact were to enter into a long-term contract with Cape Wind to purchase the power. In that instance, not only would we be the recipients of clean energy by virtue of

the laws of physics, but we would also be the direct beneficiaries of a renewable energy source, generated at a fixed rate over the life of the project, a rate spread among the 200,000 people living on the Cape and Martha's Vineyard, not spread among the many millions of people living all over New England. The wind farm could contribute 75% of our electrical needs and have a noticeable and positive impact on our electricity costs for the life of the project.

* * * * *

As a parish priest, I work and I pray for the just and proper use of God's creation. Over the last year, in my parish, we have talked about the war in Iraq and its underlying causes. There are members who have children or relatives serving in Iraq. Together, we pray for their safety and we grieve for the more than five hundred who have sacrificed their lives and for the more than ten thousand who have been wounded. For me, and perhaps for you, the sacrifice of a portion of a view of what some refer to as a national treasure simply pales in comparison to the sacrifice of the treasure of human life that we are witnessing in Iraq. We must take steps to embrace a future different from the one that we have embarked upon thus far.

On the beaches of Blavandshuk stand the remnants of World War II, cement bunkers and military command posts unchanged by the years, just closer to disappearing, finally, into the sea. It is twilight, and the lighthouse behind us casts shafts of light through the evening mist. Our group stands together and watches the lights of a few ships at sea and the lights of Horns Rev. What I see are the faint tracings of a future that hints at the coming of a more lasting peace. Momentarily, all seems beautiful to me, so far from home, so hopeful even in the midst of a war that is long past and a war that is so very present.

To me, a wind farm in Nantucket Sound represents a compelling vision for our future. In the book of Proverbs, King Solomon reminds us that "where there is no vision, the people perish." I appeal to the civic and elected leaders of the Cape and the islands -- indeed, I appeal to all of us -- to act wisely.

William Eddy, an Episcopal priest, lives in Falmouth and works in Weymouth. He is the president of Cape & Islands Self-Reliance and a founding member of Clean Power Now. He built his first wind generator in 1976 to celebrate the bicentennial of the nation.

(508 457 0656)