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Federal Green Light Given to Nation's First Offshore Wind Project

Environment America Calls for Nation to Focus on Developing More Offshore Wind

Boston, MA - Today Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick announced the Department of the Interior's final approval of the Cape Wind offshore wind project off the coast of Massachusetts. The announcement means that by 2012, Massachusetts residents could be the first in the nation to receive energy from offshore wind power.

Cape Wind, originally proposed in 2001, is a 130-turbine offshore wind power project planned for the Nantucket Sound off the coast of Cape Cod. The project will provide Massachusetts residents with enough clean, renewable energy to power 75 percent of the homes on Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. Environment America applauded the project, and called for the country to prioritize the development of more offshore wind in coming years.

"Granting the green light for Cape Wind marks a historic first step toward realizing the promise of clean, renewable offshore wind energy—not only off the coast of Massachusetts, but off coasts throughout the country," said Sean Garren, Clean Energy Advocate with Environment America. "The oil spill threatening the Gulf Coast is a sad reminder that wind energy—not more oil drilling—is the way to use our coasts to power our future."

While applauding today's announcement, Environment America also called on state and federal officials to learn from and improve upon the lengthy review process that the Cape Wind project underwent. Review of the project has taken nearly a decade as local, state and national officials have worked to ensure that the project is sited with strict adherence to environmental and safety guidelines—guidelines that Cape Wind has fulfilled at every step.

"The thorough review conducted on the Cape Wind project makes it abundantly clear that it passes environmental muster," said Garren. "We hope that state and federal officials can take what they have learned from this project and then expedite the deployment of offshore wind while continuing to protect the environment. Our environment and the emerging clean energy economy cannot wait this long for future wind projects to come online."

When originally proposed, Cape Wind was the largest offshore wind proposal in the country, but after years of delay, many other more ambitious projects along the Atlantic coast began to seem more feasible.

"While Massachusetts residents will be amongst the first in the nation to receive energy from offshore wind, **hopefully** other states along the coasts and Great Lakes will follow soon," said Garren. "The Cape Wind approval process took nearly a decade, but the lessons learned from that process will allow

America to move ahead with future offshore wind projects much more quickly.”

Environment America called for improving and streamlining current siting regulations for offshore wind projects in federal waters, while maintaining the high level of environmental protections, to ensure that future projects can come online as quickly as possible and help break America’s dependence on oil and coal and grow the nation’s clean energy economy.

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Environment America is a federation of state-based, citizen-funded environmental organizations working for clean air, clean water, and open space.