

*Vastly Cheaper Forms of Green Energy are Available, JULY 18, 2011, Wall Street Journal
BY ROBERT F. KENNEDY JR.*

Someone needs to tell the politicians in Boston and Washington that Cape Wind, the long-stalled plan to cover 25 square miles of pristine Nantucket Sound with 130 massive steel windmill-turbine towers, is a rip-off. That someone is most likely to be the newly enlightened electricity ratepayers—and voters—of Massachusetts.

In the past few months it has become clearer than ever how much this giveaway of public property is going to cost them if Cape Wind is ever built. The numbers are staggering.

Vermont wants to take its nuclear plant off line and replace it with clean, green power from HydroQuebec—power available to Massachusetts utilities—at a cost of six cents per kilowatt hour (kwh). Cape Wind electricity, by a conservative estimate and based on figures they filed with the state, comes in at 25 cents per kwh.

In Massachusetts, the utility company NSTAR has fought off intense political pressure to commit to buying Cape Wind's power when and if it becomes available. CEO Tom May has repeatedly said such a contract would impose far too large a burden on his ratepayers.

Instead, and to meet the state's requirements that utilities purchase 3.5% of their power from "green" sources, NSTAR has contracted with several far less expensive land-based wind-power providers.

According to NSTAR's own filings to certify compliance with the green-power requirement, these contracts come in at \$111 million below market averages over the standard contract period of 15 years. The price of Cape Wind power comes in at well over \$1 billion above market averages, according to Cape Wind's own regulatory filings about its contract with National Grid, the utility company that has agreed to buy half its power.

If the sea-based wind farm off Nantucket did begin operating, it is safe to deduce that National Grid customers would be getting fleeced compared to their NSTAR neighbors. The land-based wind alternatives that have sprouted up over the last decade have given utilities far cheaper alternatives to the unbuilt Cape Wind.

Bluntly put: Whether you agree or disagree with the fishermen, homeowners and environmentalists who have fought Cape Wind for a decade, the fact is this project makes no sense for ratepayers and taxpayers. Vastly cheaper forms of energy, and not just wind, are now available.

Despite this, there are ominous signs that NSTAR, after years of fighting off pressure by the state of Massachusetts to jam its customers with higher costs, is being told to accept the higher costs after all. The state's leverage? A proposed merger of NSTAR with Northeast Utilities.

In only the latest example of how heavy-handed Cape Wind's backers are, Massachusetts has suddenly agreed to change the rules for utilities as they apply to mergers and the reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions. In effect, the state administration is trying to hold hostage the proposed NSTAR-Northeast Utilities merger unless the two electric companies agree to buy Cape Wind's power.

Stopping Cape Wind is no longer merely about preventing the desecration of sacred Native American land, including land now under shallow waters in the Sound, where the turbines would also obstruct religiously significant views of the sunrise and sunset. It is no longer simply about protecting fish and fishing—which Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick has moved to do for other areas of the state. Those reasons, along with protecting the safety of boats and planes while saving Cape Cod and the Islands from a devastating blow to tourism and property values, are still valid.

Stopping Cape Wind is now about preventing us from buying into a boondoggle: from investing desperately needed federal, state and ratepayer dollars in a single project, on public land, for the benefit of a private developer when better and cheaper renewable energy—from wind and water power—is abundantly available.

Mr. Kennedy is an environmental lawyer and president of the environmental group Waterkeeper Alliance.

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