

Winergy shelves four planned turbine sites

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Citing public opposition a New York-based company has dropped plans for four of seven sites for offshore wind energy generation facilities along the Massachusetts coast.

Winergy LLC, from Shirley, N.Y., is still pursuing three other sites, said Robert Link, the company's compliance officer.

The discarded sites include a 10-turbine project off Falmouth, a similarly sized project off Gloucester, and two larger proposals south of Nantucket.

Winergy is still considering a 10-turbine project off Provincetown, in state waters, and two projects - one with 212 turbines, the other with 208 - south and east of Nantucket on Nantucket Shoals.

Both of those are in federal waters.

Cape Wind Associates, of Yarmouthport and Boston, is well along in its environmental review for a 130-turbine wind farm in Nantucket Sound.

If approved, it would be the country's first off-shore wind energy facility.

Winergy is the second company to apply to the Army Corps of Engineers for wind farm permits, but is at the beginning stages of the process.

The Corps has already been gathering public comment on Winergy's proposals in hearings and through the mail. Negative comments in that process caused Winergy to back away from the Falmouth, Gloucester and Nantucket sites.

"We looked at the public comments, and we're trying to accommodate everybody," Link said.

However, he added that the Provincetown site, a mile off-shore, generally was well received.

Winergy has said that while it identified some 21 sites along the East Coast, it had no intention of developing them all.

Link said the remaining 17 sites will be whittled down to 10 within the next several weeks.

"We're only looking to develop three or four sites anyway," he said.

New England region Army Corps spokesman Larry Rosenberg said his agency has not yet decided whether the company will have to file full-scale environmental impact statements under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Under the state's equivalent statute, officials have already ruled that a similar environmental study must be conducted for the Provincetown site.

Link said that the National Park Service has also alerted Winergy that it will require such a study for the Provincetown wind farm, since the electric cable would come ashore within the boundaries of the Cape Cod National Seashore.

Winergy is farthest along in the planning process with a 150-turbine wind farm off the Virginia coast.

Link said the site selection process there included four alternatives, but the near-shore site was preferred by the state, and Northampton County, which can exercise more control over the project, and collect tax revenue.

Although within sight of shore, the project is partially blocked by uninhabited barrier islands just off the coast.

(Published: July 31, 2003)