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New England District**

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Corps announces alternatives to be reviewed in windfarm EIS

CONCORD, Mass. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced today at a public information meeting in North Falmouth, Mass., the list of alternative sites that will need to be investigated as part of the Cape Wind windfarm Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Corps of Engineers discussed its screening criteria and the alternatives selected for further review in the EIS being prepared in response to a permit application from Cape Wind Associates, LLC for the installation and operation of 130 offshore wind turbine generators in Nantucket Sound.

“The Corps has been working closely with federal, state and local agencies on developing the alternatives analysis,” said District Engineer Col. Thomas Koning, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District. “Through the scoping hearings and public meetings since the spring of 2002, 17 sites were identified by the public and cooperating agencies as possible alternatives.”

Five screening criteria were used to evaluate those alternatives: availability of renewable energy (i.e. wind power classification); ISO New England grid connection availability (connection point, transmission/distribution lines, efficiency/capacity); available land or water area; engineering constraints (constructability, geotechnical conditions, water depths); and legal/regulatory constraints (i.e. endangered species, shipping channels, etc.).

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“Working with the cooperating agencies, the Corps felt it needed to take a more flexible, subjective approach to developing representative sites for the alternative analysis,” Koning said. “A strict pass/fail screening process wouldn’t work.”

“NEPA allows the Corps to limit alternatives to a reasonable number so that the EIS can compare the alternatives,” Koning said.

The Corps, with cooperating agency consultation, determined reasonable sites that cover the spectrum of: 1) Shallow water off-shore site; 2) Deeper water off-shore site; 3) On-shore site; 4) Two or more smaller sites combined to achieve the intended purpose and need.

“Using that flexible concept, the Corps selected six specific sites that will be carried forward for more detailed review in the windfarm EIS,” Koning said.

The onshore alternative is MMR – the Massachusetts Military Reservation on Cape Cod, Mass.; the shallow water alternatives are three – the applicant’s preferred alternative of Horseshoe Shoal, and also Tuckernuck Shoal, and Hankerchief Shoal, Mass.; and the combined locations are New Bedford Harbor, Mass., and a reduced footprint at Horseshoe Shoal. The area south of Tuckernuck Island, Mass., will serve as a deep-water site.

“Using representative samples will give us a basis for comparison,” Koning said. “We will be better able to determine what the relative merits are of each type of alternative site. This process will ensure that we do what is required in accordance with the intent of NEPA and for the public interest determination of this windfarm review as required by our regulations.”

Attending the meeting were Federal, state and local agencies, stakeholders in the windfarm project and the general public.

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The next step in the process will be that the Corps, and the cooperating agencies, will assess what information is currently available on these six alternative sites and determine what additional information will be needed to be included in the Draft EIS.

Based on the EIS scope developed last year, the factors that will be addressed for each of the alternative sites undergoing detailed review will include: avian, marine/habitat, fisheries and benthos, aviation, telecommunications, navigation, socio-economic, cultural/historical properties, aesthetic/landscape/visual, recreation, noise and vibration, water quality, electric and magnetic fields, air and climate, safety, engineering, and economics.

For more information on the permit application check the Corps website at <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil>. Select “projects” and then Cape Wind windfarm permit application.

For those who want to submit public comments, send them to wind.energy@usace.army.mil or mail them to EIS Project Manager Karen Adams, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District, 696 Virginia Road, Concord, MA 01742-2751.