The Cape Wind Project

ES 211 Service Learning Project
Conservation and Environmental Policy
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Introduction and Background

The Cape Wind Project could potentially lead to the breakthrough of alternative/renewable energy sources and be the impetus that guides the United States on a path to energy security and plans to reduce its environmental impacts. Cape Wind is the direct result of a new England energy company, Energy Management, Inc., which started to form an agenda for energy conservation and pollution control projects for local industrial companies in 1975.

Currently, their largest effort, Cape Wind, is under attack by politicians nation-wide. Cape Wind is the title of a project that is planning to build America’s first offshore wind farm in Nantucket Sound. These wind turbines will supply three quarters of the island’s energy and will decrease the oil consumption of the area by 113 million gallons, meanwhile creating many local jobs and being a huge step in alternative energy sources for the United States.

However, politicians (Senator Stevens and Congressman Don Young – Alaska) who wish to see the country continue to be fossil fuel reliant, have attacked Cape Wind. Also, this project is located within viewing distance of several prominent senators, causing some consternation due to conflicting interests (Senator Ted Kennedy – Massachusetts). Due to their disagreement with Cape Wind, the aforementioned politicians tacked on an amendment to the Coast Guard Reauthorization Act, which, if passed, would end the Cape Wind Project in its current state.

The Young Amendment, a backroom provision to the United States Coast Guard Bill, restricted wind turbines within one and a half miles of shipping and ferry lanes. If passed, it would have made the project economically impossible. Soon, the Young Amendment was discarded in favor
of the Stevens Amendment, proposed by Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska, which would give the
veto power of projects like Cape Wind to the governor of Massachusetts. The current governor,
Mitt Romney, has already publicly stated his opposition to Cape Wind so this underhanded
amendment will also signal the end of Cape Wind.

This form of backdoor politics is not conducive to the democratic system and is therefore not in
the nation’s best interests. The decision on Cape Wind has been pending in the senate since the
week of April 23, 2006. No final verdict had yet been reached at the time this report was written.

Supporting renewable energy in an attempt to increase the energy security of the United States,
showing that relying on fossil fuels is no longer economically viable and discouraging the
success of attempts to squeeze altered legislation through to become law is very important. Also,
for the future of our country and the world, it is necessary that the populace recognizes that there
is a limited supply of fossil fuels and our use of fossil fuels is a significant contributor to the
global climate issues that are surfacing in this era.

Working with Cape Wind Associates has allowed our group to see what we have read in class
occur in real life scenarios. Cape Wind relates to Washington at Work by Richard E. Cohen with
issues such as backroom politics. In Washington at Work, we see instances of informal
procedures that can positively or negatively affect policy formation. With the Clean Air Act
Amendment of 1990, we see George Mitchell use backroom politics positively. Removing the
discussions from public record allowed politicians to look farther into the future unhindered by
election pressures. In 2006, however, we are seeing the negative effects of backroom politics on
policy formation. Politicians with questionable motives are hatching amendments to harm our country’s future in alternative energy.

Other readings, like Statehouse and Greenhouse by Barry G. Rabe, also pertain to the Cape Wind project. From the many examples that he used, it becomes clear that many will not act to counter global warming without incentives and usually those must be economic incentives. Cape Wind provides this because it will decrease electricity costs, make the island more sustainable, and decrease its pollution.

**Methodology**

Our methods consisted of garnering support for the Cape Wind project, networking with students and lobbying key politicians in an attempt to raise awareness. We worked with our community partner, Rachel Pachter of Cape Wind Associates, and had two conference calls with her. The first took place on March 16th, during which we discussed the history of Cape Wind, the obstacles in the House and the Senate, and our goals for the project. Our goals included stimulating public, student, and political support. The second, on April 13th, was a discussion about deadlines for advocacy letters and developing a strategy for informing key individuals, student groups, and other stakeholders about these deadlines.

To initiate networking, we began by drafting a letter to student environmental groups at colleges in New England, which we sent to Rachel for approval (Appendix A). The letter was send to student groups at Boston University, Boston College, Williams College, Yale University, and
Brown University. We also spoke with the Sunday Night Group, Middlebury College’s student environmental group, about this important initiative.

To raise political awareness, we sent a letter and a fact sheet detailing the Coast Guard Authorization Conference Report to Senator Jim Jeffords (Vermont) (Appendix B). In addition, members of our service-learning group, along with the rest of the students in our class, each sent a personal letter to our state senators encouraging them to vote against the Stevens Amendment when Congress returned to session on April 24th. For our group, this meant letter were sent to Senators Santorum (PA), Boxer (CA), Kerry (MA), Byrd (WV) and Rockefeller (WV) (Appendix B).

To notify the public, a letter to the editor was written and submitted to several newspapers in Alaska, Vermont, and Pennsylvania describing the implications of passing the anti-renewable energy legislation written in the Coast Guard Reauthorization Bill. It also urged citizens to contact their senators and express their disapproval of the attempt to end Cape Wind. At the time this report was written, our letters were published in two papers in Alaska – The Homer Tribune and The Homer News.

**Results**

On April 6th, the final version of the House Resolution 889 Coast guard Reauthorization Act was filed with the provision in Section 414 to effectively provide veto authority of any “wind energy facility” on Nantucket Sound to Governor Mitt Romney. A three on three deadlock in committee was broken when Senator Gordon Smith of Oregon broke the tie before Maria Cantwell (the
seventh vote) could make her statement. Cantwell referred the matter to the ranking Democrats on the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committees, Pete Domenici and Jeff Bingaman respectively, both of New Mexico. “I believe this provision – and then general issue of citing offshore energy projects – must be viewed within the context of other laws and precedents that determine the role of states in making these decisions, and thus deserves greater public debate and the additional scrutiny an Energy Committee hearing might provide.” In sum, this issue has not blown over through the senate. Our efforts had been aimed at rallying support and awareness for Cape Wind, but recently others campaigns have addressed the precedent Section 414 might set. For example, the Bush Administration recently demonstrated its opposition to Section 414. Empirical results show that opinions throughout the Senate regarding the questionable process and spirit of the bill have become increasingly vocal and visible in national publications like the New York Times.

Even if Cape Wind falls to Romney’s veto, we can claim success if we raised awareness and support for future projects such as Cape Wind across the country. By raising support for this project nationally, we helped create awareness and publicity for what was once solely a local Cape and Islands issue. Immediate returns to our efforts were never expected, but we hope we raised awareness not only of the Cape Wind Project, but also made people aware of the backroom congressional deals that threaten the project. We used grassroots strategies of writing letters, contacting leadership, and forwarding information to concerned parties to garner attention and inspire debate and discussion amongst individuals. By using networks of student groups provided to us by Rachel Pachter, Diane Munroe, and Jon Isham, in approximately one and a half months, our groups of four individuals managed to reach out to hundreds of formerly
uninformed students. In sum, we made some people care about an issue that normally would not have been important to them. In the minds of who we reached, Cape Wind is not a local Coast Guard issue, but rather it is an issue of vital precedence for future clean energy efforts.

**Recommendations**

First and foremost, it is valuable to remember the importance of attacking negative aspects of backroom politics, as noted earlier. In issues such as alternative energy and the environment, many well established economic interests are often attacked. In instances such as the Clean Air Acts of 1979 and 1990, we see a fear that restrictions may be imposed which are commonly believed to impeded economic growth. In these issues, very influential citizens with narrow interests get involved and may negatively manipulate the formation of policy at the expense of overall welfare. Recently, in matters related to Cape Wind, we notice the high level of opposition to the proposed alternative energy project. When one analyzes the key figures spearheading this resistance—two Alaskan senators—it is doubtful that they are unbiased in their efforts. It is for this reason that we should publicize these backroom tactics in order to ensure that they do not negatively affect policy formation.

We also believe that in order to progress an overcome future obstacles, policy entrepreneurs should be aware of the benefits of framing. In order not to be laughed out of the room and then ignored, it is important not to address our goals as environmental. This has traditionally bee viewed as a zero-sum gain. The perception is that when there is an environmental gain, it means an economic loss. However, in actuality, we witness sustainable development and economic integrity advance together. Therefore, while keeping this in mind and appealing to the values of
the average person, we should formulate our language in a way that illustrates the economic and social benefits of our policies.

**Conclusions**

After working with Cape Wind, we feel that any community member that wishes to help an organization should involve themselves in the politics of the situation. It seems that the only way to accomplish one’s goals is to go through those in power. Unfortunately, as we have explained, one of the biggest obstacles that alternative energy is facing is politicians with narrow interests. Therefore, in our approach, we believed that the best strategy to use in order to combat this obstacle was to mobilize the public which would ultimately influence positive policy formation.
Bibliography

Cape Wind Associates, LLC, www.capewind.org


Appendix A – Letter to Student Groups

Take Action

Help Save Cape Wind
From Backroom Politics

What is Cape Wind?
Cape Wind is proposing America’s first offshore wind farm on Horseshoe Shoal in Nantucket Sound. Miles from the nearest shore, 130 wind turbines will gracefully harness the wind to produce up to 420 megawatts of clean, renewable energy. In average winds, Cape Wind will provide three quarters of the Cape and Islands electricity needs.

Why Should You Care About a Seemingly Regional Issue?

Clean Air:
Our health and environment are negatively impacted by fossil fuel burning. The American Lung Association reports that Cape Cod has the worst air quality in Massachusetts. Cape Wind will contribute to improved air quality by reducing air pollution emissions in New England. Cape Wind will also reduce global warming greenhouse gas emissions by almost one million tons per year - equivalent of removing 162,000 cars from the road. Global warming contributes to rising sea levels and more frequent storms that erode our beaches and cause coastal property damage. Global warming and climate change present the greatest threat to birds and sea life and their habitat.

Energy Independence:
Since 1973, America has transferred over seven trillion dollars of its wealth to OPEC countries. Our dependence on foreign energy leaves our economy and national security at risk. By harnessing our local wind resources, we can contribute to reducing our dependence on imported energy. Cape Wind will provide clean, renewable energy capable of replacing 113 million gallons of oil per year.

So What’s The Problem Here?
Continued on the back you will see how shady backroom politics threatens first step for clean renewable energy.
Backroom Politics...

Senator Kennedy (D-MA) is using log-rolling to convince Representative Young and Senator Stevens both from Alaska to submit provisions into Coast Guard Reauthorization Act H.R. 889 preventing Cape Wind.

Young Amendment-- Not Included
An amendment to H.R. 889 that would not allow Wind Farms within a certain radius of shipping lanes. This amendment lost merit when the Coast Guard dismissed the validity of such a provision.

Stevens Amendment--Filed:Section 414
An amendment to H.R. 889 to provide veto powers over this project to the Governor of Massachusetts despite its location in Federal waters. Governor Mitt Romney (R) is an adamant opponent to Cape Wind.
Dear Senator Jim Jeffords,

We are Vermont students and concerned citizens, working to save the Cape Wind proposal from backdoor congressional legislation. Cape Wind is proposing America’s first offshore wind farm on Horseshoe Shoal in Nantucket Sound. This would include 130 wind turbines, which could produce up to 420 megawatts of renewable energy, providing three quarters of the Cape and Island’s electricity needs. If constructed, the turbines would save 113 million gallons of oil per year.

Cape Wind is constantly under attack from legislation attempting to stall the process, particularly the Stevens Amendment, which is a backhanded legislative effort to eradicate offshore wind turbines to the extent that the project will become unachievable. Our group will be contacting student groups to inform them about the benefits of wind energy and to spread awareness of this landmark struggle for renewable resources, in order to garner their support for Cape Wind.

The consequences of allowing the Stevens amendment to pass could prevent future development of offshore wind-turbines. America is at a cross-road with respect to environmentalism. We must develop, invest in, and promote clean energy opportunities in order to secure a clean environment. With enough support, we hope that bills such as the Stevens Amendment do not derail a scientifically evaluated and approved project, and that the Cape Wind Organization will be able to progress with this valuable contribution to New England’s renewable energy.

Thank you,

Allison Bard ’08, Emily Hendrick ’08,
Nate Shreve ’08, and Nickhil Bhave ‘08
April 20, 2006

Dear Senator John Kerry,

With oil prices soaring over 75$ a barrel and many New Englanders recently barely being able to pay home heating bills, now is the time to make a bold statement concerning our energy future. Taxpayers fund various expensive projects to research and subsidize clean domestic energy alternatives while a bill lands in your hands, Senator Kerry, to thwart America’s largest clean energy venture. The Conference Report on H.R. 889, the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2006, contains a provision (Section 414) that would effectively kill the nation’s first offshore wind energy project.

As a Lexington, MA resident and a concerned student at Middlebury College, I hope to garner your support to save the Cape Wind proposal from backdoor congressional legislation. Cape Wind is proposing America’s first offshore wind farm on Horseshoe Shoal in Nantucket Sound. This would include 130 wind turbines, which could produce up to 420 megawatts of renewable energy, providing three quarters of the Cape and Island’s electricity needs. If constructed, the turbines would save 113 million gallons of oil per year.

The nation is headed for an energy crisis that can not and will not be solved with intervention in the Middle East. Many politicians ally themselves with the environment and removal of foreign energy dependence, but in this case many appear to be issuing false promises. I have worked hard to inform fellow students about the benefits of wind energy and to spread awareness of this landmark struggle for renewable resources, in order to garner their support for Cape Wind. Grassroots efforts aside, the state of Massachusetts and the nation need a leader like you to demonstrate the clear need for clean energy and the precedence that eliminating this wind farm would set.

The consequences of allowing Section 414 to pass will prevent future development of offshore wind turbines. We must develop, invest in, and promote clean energy opportunities in order to secure a clean environment. Simultaneously, this one project will send the message that America wants clean domestic energy— we will not continue purchase foreign energy resources at incredible cost to our economy and consumers. With your support, I believe that the Senate will not derailed a scientifically evaluated and approved project, and that the Cape Wind Organization will be able to make an important step towards a clean domestic energy future for New England and the nation. I believed in your vision and your abilities when I voted for you in 2004—here is another chance to lead the nation towards a better future.

Thank you,

Nickhil Bhave (Class of 2008)
April 20th, 2006

Dear Senator Barbara Boxer,

I am a San Francisco resident attending Middlebury College in Vermont, and have been working with a group of students to save the Cape Wind proposal from backdoor legislation. Cape Wind, as you may have heard, is a project proposing America’s first offshore wind farm on Horseshoe Shoal in Nantucket Sound. The goal is to build 130 wind turbines that could provide up to 75% of the Cape’s and Islands electricity needs, thereby saving 113 million gallons of oil per year.

Cape Wind has recently been facing much opposition in the form of backhanded legislation designed to eradicate the project altogether. First there was the Young Amendment by Congressman Don Young of Alaska, which was a part of the Coast Guard appropriations bill and would have prohibited wind farms within one-and-a-half miles of a shipping or ferry lane – a measure openly intended to halt the project. Our current concern, however, is an amendment by Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska, which would give the Massachusetts governor the right to veto the plan. Governor Mitt Romney has already declared his opposition to Cape Wind.

When Congress returns to session on Monday you will vote on the Coast Guard Reauthorization Act that includes the Stevens language, and the fate of Cape Wind could be decided then and there. With oil prices continuously rising, it is more crucial than ever that America invests in new forms of clean energy. Senator Boxer, I admire your past commitment to creating a cleaner, healthier environment, particularly your leadership in the fight to block oil drilling in the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge. I now ask for your support for Cape Wind, so that we do not miss this opportunity to make a valuable contribution to the future of New England’s clean energy.

Sincerely,

Emily Hendrick
(802) 443-4701
ehendric@middlebury.edu
Dear Senator,

I’m a Middlebury College student and concerned West Virginian, working to save the Cape Wind proposal from backdoor congressional legislation. Cape Wind is proposing America’s first offshore wind farm on Horseshoe Shoal in Nantucket Sound. This would include 130 wind turbines, which could produce up to 420 megawatts of renewable energy, providing three quarters of the Cape and Island’s electricity needs. If constructed, the turbines would save 113 million gallons of oil per year.

However, Cape Wind has been recently under attack by narrowly interested political figures attempting to end the project despite the obvious heath, economic, and nation security benefits that wind energy creates. The Stevens Amendment in the Coast Guard Reauthorization Bill is a backhanded legislative effort that would devastate the development of present and future offshore wind turbines in Massachusetts. My student group has been contacting other student groups to inform them about the benefits of wind energy and to spread awareness of this landmark legislative attack against renewable energy.

The consequences of allowing the Stevens amendment to pass would be devastating. Our country is at a cross-road with respect to environmentalism. We must develop, invest in, and promote clean energy opportunities in order to secure a healthy America, clean environment, and less energy dependent future. I would like you to reject the language inserted in the Coast Guard Reauthorization Act that gives veto power to the Massachusetts Governor over the Cape Wind project in the federal waters of Nantucket Sound. This will allow the Cape Wind Organization to be able to progress and contribute to the future of New England, the U.S., and our World community.

Thank you,

Nate Shreve ’08
April 20, 2006

Attn: Ms. Ashley Horning and Mr. Matthew Beynon
United States Senator Rick Santorum
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Santorum,

I was so thrilled to meet you several years ago when you presented me with the United States Congressional Award at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia. You may remember my mother, former State Representative Ellen Bard, who was with me at the ceremony. I would like to thank you for taking an interest in people my age and our futures.

I have one concern about a piece of legislation that, if passed unchanged, will tremendously affect the future of my generation. On April 24, 2006, the House of Representatives and the Senate will vote on the Coast Guard Reauthorization Act. In its current state, this act contains Senator Stevens’/anti-renewable energy language. This anti-renewable energy language was added with a swift move of backdoor politics and will signal the demise of Cape Wind, an offshore wind farm that, once constructed, will provide energy by wind power to over three quarters of Nantucket Island’s population.

Please join your fellow senators Bingaman and Domenici in removing the anti-renewable energy security language in the Coast Guard Reauthorization Act. Unless you stop this Stevens Amendment, the last minute action taken by the senator will set an example indicating the lack of reform in Congress. The language in the legislation would be unprecedented because it gives a Governor the ability to veto the decisions of federal agencies over energy production in federal waters on the outer continental shelf, thus, greatly endangering the success of future projects.

Utilizing renewable energy is necessary for this nation’s security and also necessary for the world’s environment. In 2002, in response to the President’s plan aimed at reducing carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions you said, "This new approach encourages a cleaner, global environment by investing in conservation and new technologies at a time when our nation must do all that it can to sustain jobs and to provide new opportunities for workers." Cape Wind satisfies all of this and more.

The completion of the Cape Wind project will not only generate an estimated 600 to 1,000 jobs in the region, but it will also be the first offshore wind farm installed in the United
States and therefore, a gateway into other renewable energy options. It is critical for my generation that the United States support the pursuit of energy security and remove the anti-renewable energy language in the Coast Guard Reauthorization Act.

I hope that you enjoyed your holiday recess and I look forward to hearing about your actions on this issue. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

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