The Industry Buzz

Not In My Backyard

If you were to ask the average person on the street if they were for wind generated power, I would be willing to bet the majority of them would without hesitation say “yes”. But that is the wrong way to frame the question because it is painfully clear at this time people are for wind generated power as long as it isn’t in their back yards.

The Energy Department claims wind generated electricity could supply 20% of the U.S. power needs by 2030 compared to the 1.8% it does today. President George W. Bush’s first energy secretary Spencer Abraham says there is no way to achieve that goal if projects continue to be blocked by governmental & local opponents like those opposing Caithness Energy’s 845 megawatt project in Eastern Oregon or Cape Winds 468 megawatt project in Nantucket Sound off the Cape of Massachusetts.

“When we talk about what’s made America’s energy policies so challenging to devise it’s in no small measure this whole-not-in-my-backyard sentiment. Every time you think you’ve satisfied protest group No. 1, there’s protest group No. 2” said Abrahams recently.

Meeting the Energy Departments 2030 goal will require 54,000 megawatts of offshore wind power according to the American Wind Energy Association, that is more than a windmill here and a windmill there.

If you can’t feed the population with small backyard gardens, doesn’t it only make sense that you are not going to generate the amount of electricity needed to feed this energy hungry nation without large wind farms all over the country.

Who are these protestors that are continually throwing up legal and governmental challenges to the wind farms that will help reduce oil dependence?

In Eastern Oregon it is the Defense Department that is attempting to scuttle Caithness Energy’s building of an 845 Megawatt wind farm that would be the world biggest because they claim the turbines could interfere with the Air Force’s radar detection system. The Defense Departments objections may also stop three other wind projects in the economically depressed region from going up along with many other projects in states from Illinois to Texas.

In Nantucket sound it is the leaders of the Aquinnah Wampanoag Indians who claim the 440 ft. above the waterline structures wind turbine blades could block their view of the sunrise that is essential to their prayer ceremonies, Nantucket’s Whaling Era Supporters and The dying wish of Former Senator Ted Kennedy who one month before he died wrote president Obama asking him to halt the wind farm which would be visible from the Senator’s home.
According to simulations done for Cape Wind, on a clear day the turbines would look about a half-inch tall on the horizon at the nearest point and appear as specks from Nantucket.

The 130 windmills would produce a maximum of 468 Megawatts (1 megawatt can power 800 avg. homes) and would be spread out over a 25 square mile area that is part of Horseshoe Shoal.

This entire project will generate less than 1% of the energy depart's goal for 2030 which I hope gives everyone a clearer picture of just how many of these wind farms we need.

Then there is the issue of you can’t just put these anywhere. They obviously must be placed in areas where there is frequent wind.

And finally let’s talk about the funding necessary to build these wind farms.

Caithness Energy’s 845 megawatt project has a projected price tag of 2 billion dollars while Cape Winds Nantucket project is project to cost over 1 billion dollars and this is just a drop in the bucket to what needs to be invested.

The Energy Department estimates it will cost 2.4 to 5 million per megawatt to install meaning that reaching the 2030 goal could cost a whopping 270 Billion dollars.

Think about that. If it was your money would you make those kinds of investments if you were not sure that the American people and it leaders were fully behind the projects even if it means their own back yards.

It is easy to complain about the need to get off foreign oil or not allowing liquefied natural gas tanker terminals in our harbors but what are the alternatives if we are against drilling for natural gas and oil, wind mills or large solar projects in our own back yards?