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THIS MONTH

Catching the Wind

A Homerun for the Environment

by Stacy Clark



What is the world's fastest-growing source of renewable energy? Perhaps it is *you*, exploring the world doing what you love best—rollerblading, biking, swimming, team sports and skating! But what about the kind of renewable energy that can heat stadiums in the winter, light sports fields at night and chill rinks in the summer?

As of 2003, wind power became the *world's fastest-growing renewable energy source!* Why? Well, just think about it. Like you, the wind never stops! And, wherever it blows often, its power can be captured and converted to electricity!

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Back to the Future



The design of early windmills, used hundreds of years ago to grind grain and pump water, is reflected today in the design of *wind turbines*. Much larger and taller than windmills of the past, modern wind turbines capture and convert wind energy to electricity very efficiently. When tens or hundreds of wind turbines are built close together to form a *wind farm* or *wind park*, they can generate electricity for thousands of stadiums, fields and sports arenas—and, yes, schools and homes too!

Global Reach of Wind Power



Literally all over the world—from California to Canada, England to India and Texas to Tanzania—wind farms are being built on land (onshore) and in water (offshore) to generate the kind of clean, renewable energy the world needs now. Unlike the electricity that comes from burning fossil fuels (such as coal and natural gas), wind farms produce 0% air pollutants and 0% water pollutants. Sweet!

Cape Wind Project

In part because offshore wind farms in Europe have proven to be so popular (people like the fact that they produce “clean” electricity), the first offshore wind farm in the United States is



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expected to begin construction, by 2005, off the coast of Massachusetts. This is great news for the company's President, Jim Gordon, who is often overheard saying, "Just six miles off the coast of Cape Cod is an awesome, inexhaustible supply of wind!"

Jim is talking about his offshore Cape Wind project, located in Nantucket Sound. Here, where winds are consistently strong, water is shallow, and wave heights are low, Jim's company hopes to build 130 turbines on 24 square miles of water known as Horseshoe Shoal.

Cape Cod is located in the southeastern portion of Massachusetts, where the air quality is reported to be the worst in the state, according to the American Lung Association. So the prospect of a wind farm producing 75 percent of the energy Cape Cod needs is seen by many as an important step in improving the region's air quality.

Environmental Debate



While everyone is in favor of cleaner air, bird enthusiasts are concerned that shore birds will be killed in the spinning blades of the turbines. Project advocates insist, however, that at 16 rotations per minute (rpm), most birds will adapt and learn to fly through or around the turbines. They also make the point that it is air pollutants from nearby coal- and oil-fired electrical power plants and oil spills along the coastlines that remain the *real* threats to bird populations. Additionally, a February 3, 2004 Associated Press article reports that collisions with reflective glass windows (particularly those in office buildings) kill up to one billion birds a year in the U.S. alone.

Advocates for the project also point to the widespread residential and commercial development on the Cape, suggesting that the loss of green spaces is another cause for declining bird populations. Development, they say, has replaced many of the nesting and feeding grounds that shore birds rely on.

And while Cape Wind's simulated models of the project indicate that views of the turbines from Hyannis (one of the closest points to Horseshoe Shoal) will resemble a line of half-inch high toothpicks on the horizon, there is concern among some residents that the presence of the turbines will detract from the natural beauty of the Cape.

The Theory of Beauty: It's all Relative



While Cape Coders will likely continue to debate the visual appeal of Cape Wind's project, their discussion raises an interesting question. Perhaps there's more to consider than just the physical dimensions of the turbines themselves.

Think about this. The Cape Wind project will eliminate millions of tons of greenhouse gases from the air each year. So maybe it's not surprising that many project advocates—all too familiar with the environmental damage these gases cause each year—describe the turbines as eco-heroes. Through their eyes, the Cape Wind project looks like a family of "grown-up" windmills, collectively capable of winning the battle against global warming and air pollution thanks to their unique combination of brains, natural talent and non-polluting poise. For them, the turbines represent innovation at its very best.

For these smitten wind fans (and there *are* many), the enduring beauty of the turbines may well rest in their unconditional promise of clean, renewable energy, a more sustainable environment, and fewer deaths from lung

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disease and cancer.

What do you see when you imagine your world powered by wind? We want to know!

Enter the [Cape Wind Associates Energy for Life Art Contest](#) and share your vision of the future!

Comment on this Article

What do you think about wind power? Email us at stacy@emagazine.com

Ask Questions about this Article

Do you have questions about the world's fastest growing source of renewable energy? Put them to the expert himself! Jim Gordon has kindly agreed to be your direct channel to the renewable energy future! Email him at jim@capewind.org and be sure to mention E!

Additional Resources on this Article

Interested in seeing the simulated views Cape Wind has created to illustrate what their project will look like from Cape Cod and its islands? [Click here!](#)

In America, there are wind projects operating or planned in 28 states. Check out the [American Wind Energy Association](#) to find out if wind facilities are located near you.

And, in Europe, visit the [European Wind Energy Association](#) website.

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