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Secretary Salazar Moves toward Final Decision on Cape Wind

03/01/2010

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WASHINGTON? Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today concluded the historic preservation consultation process for the proposed Cape Wind energy project in Nantucket Sound, clearing the way for a final decision on the project.

The Secretary notified the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation that the parties to the consultations have not been able to reach agreement on mitigation actions for the proposed wind turbine farm in federal waters of Nantucket Sound. The Council has 45 days to provide an opportunity for the consulting parties and the public to offer their views. The Advisory Council will then provide its comments to the Secretary, who will take those comments into consideration before deciding whether to approve or deny the project.

"The time has come to bring the reviews and analysis of the Cape Wind Project to a conclusion," Secretary Salazar said. "It is clear to me that the consulting parties are not able to bridge their divides and reach agreement on actions to minimize and mitigate the Cape Wind Project's effects on historic and cultural resources. I am asking the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation for their comments and I will then make a final decision on the proposal. The parties, the public, and the permit applicants deserve resolution and certainty."

Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, federal agencies must take into account the effects of a proposed project on historic properties and determine through the consultation process whether agreement can be reached on minimizing or mitigating any adverse effects of the proposed project. Parties may reach agreement on mitigation measures and sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) detailing agreed-upon actions, or may terminate the consultation under Section 106 if one of them determines that further consultation would not be productive. The parties to a potential MOA – the Minerals Management Service, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Officer and Cape Wind LLC – have been meeting since July 2008 to consider effected sites and since June 2009 to consider potential measures to mitigate adverse impacts on identified historic and cultural resources in and around Nantucket, Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Sound.

During a meeting on January 13, 2010 with the various consulting parties in Washington, D.C., the Secretary set a March 1 deadline for determining whether it was possible to reach agreement on acceptable mitigation measures for the project. The Secretary then traveled to Massachusetts on February 2, 2010 to continue the 106 consultation process, meeting with the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) and visiting several of the tribal cultural sites, as well as viewing the proposed project site in Nantucket Sound.

The Department is releasing today a letter that officially notifies the parties that the Secretary has terminated the Section 106 consultation, and is requesting input from the Advisory Council.

Background

Cape Wind Associates, LLC has proposed to construct and operate a commercial wind energy facility on the Outer Continental Shelf offshore of Massachusetts. The project calls for 130 turbines of 3.6 megawatts, each with a maximum blade height of 440 feet, to be arranged in a grid pattern in 25 square miles of Nantucket Sound in Federal waters offshore Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket Island. The projected maximum electric output would be 468 megawatts (average of 183 MW) and serve communities in the Nantucket Sound area.

Review of the Cape Wind project began in 2001 when Cape Wind Associates, LLC applied for a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to construct an offshore wind power facility on Horseshoe Shoal in Nantucket Sound, offshore of Massachusetts. Over the next three years, the Corps completed a Draft Environmental Impact Statement along with a separate review and issuance of a permit to construct a meteorological tower for data collection purposes.

After the adoption of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the Department of the Interior was given authority for offshore wind projects, including the Cape Wind application, and since that time has completed an Environmental Impact Statement and conducted eight official National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 meetings in Massachusetts and Washington, D.C. This is in addition to many other discussions with tribal officials, state officials, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and other consulting parties, as well as official public commenting periods conducted during the environmental review and Section 106 consultation process. Over the course of the Cape Wind project review process, the MMS collected and analyzed approximately 75,000 public comments.

- Minerals Management Service Fact Sheet: <http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/upload/03-01-10-CAPE-WIND-Fact-Sheet.pdf>
- Secretary Salazar's Letter of Notification: <http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/upload/03-01-10-CAPE-WIND-LETTER-2.pdf>



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