

# Local Columns

Thursday, November 30, 2023

## OPINION: Lawsuits drop over wind industry’s ‘industrialization’ of ocean views



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By **David Collins**

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Like many people, I bought in for a long time to the notion, aggressively promoted by the offshore wind industry, that the huge turbines being proposed would hardly be visible from shore.

Well, here comes the puncturing of that myth, with new lawsuits, being brought by Newport preservationists and stewards of Block Island’s Southeast Lighthouse, that warn of the catastrophic impact the turbines will have on shoreline viewsheds.



...ervation Society of Newport County, on behalf of the coastal Rhode Island city’s iconic mansions, contend the adverse visual impacts will have billions of dollars of impact on tourism and property values over the 30-year life of the turbines.

They cite an internal study by wind farm developer, Danish utility Ørsted, that estimates the annual negative impact on the tourism economy at 15%, which they say is conservative.

The lawsuits, filed in federal court by the law firm Cultural Heritage Partners, seek an injunction to stop construction of the South Fork Wind Farm and Revolution Wind, with their proposed 112 turbines towering more than 800 feet in height.

The turbines for both farms are to be assembled at State Pier in New London, although only Revolution Wind is supposed to supply power to Connecticut.

“Proposed projects will inflict severe and long-lasting effects on the character, community and heritage-tourism-driven economy of Block Island,” says the complaint in the lawsuit by the lighthouse, which is a National Historic Landmark, New England’s tallest.

“Block Island is obviously not anti-wind energy,” Dr. Gerry Abbott, president of the lighthouse board said in a statement, noting the island hosted the first full-built offshore wind farm.

“But imagining the impact of an 11,000% increase in the number of visible turbines off our coast and knowing they will remain for the next 30 years — is nothing short of stunning — a complete industrialization of our view.”

Greg Werkheiser, a founding partner of the law firm Cultural Heritage Partners, said that from much of Block Island shoreline where you would see the mass of turbines. He said the law firm has commissioned its own visualizations of what they would look like, and it shows the impact to be far worse than what was presented by Ørsted.

The lawsuits name as defendants the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and say the government ignored laws that should have taken into account much more of the significant impact the turbines will have on the natural environment and historic resources.

Werkheiser said the lawsuits were filed now because this is the first time in the process they have been legally permissible, although, he said, his clients repeatedly raised objections to the wind farms during the regulatory review.

He said they are seeking legally appropriate mitigation of the significant impact of the projects, including compensation for the way they will negatively harm local economies.

“BOEM has to be honest about the impact, and we want the law to be followed,” Werkheiser said.

He added that lawsuits from other communities could follow, and his own firm has been working with other potential plaintiffs in New England.

The National Congress of American Indians, he noted, have called for a moratorium on the wind farms “until BOEM starts doing its job.”

Given Ørsted’s molasses-slow agreement to finally compensate host community New London for use of State Pier, withholding any deal until the city finally went to court, I don’t see a quick offer of compensation to the plaintiffs in these lawsuits.

And in light of the company abandoning planned wind farms off New Jersey and repricing others with higher electric rates, the future of U.S. offshore wind looks more tenuous than ever.

One myth of offshore wind — that it will be a relatively inexpensive renewable — is pretty tarnished and about to be shattered. And so is the myth of little visual impact on the horizon.

So far, the only honest assessment of Ørsted I’ve heard from an American politician of any party came from an angry Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy of New Jersey, who challenged the company’s competence and credibility when they canceled New Jersey’s farms this fall.

Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont is still in his loving embrace with the foreign utility.

I wonder if more lawsuits and political pressure will make any difference in how offshore wind does or doesn’t take flight here in the Northeast.

*This is the opinion of David Collins.*

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## READER COMMENTS

**Richard Golden** November 30, 2023 at 09:07

Report

For what has been spent, studying this windfarm; legislating this windfarm and yet to be spent billions to construct it and operate it and maintain it....we could have built 5 or 6 nuclear reactors with 100 times the generating capacity and no smoke....  
The 30 year life expectancy of the wind turbines is more problematic when you realize the platforms will also need to be removed and replaced and the cost to do that is horrendous. (<https://www.worldoil.com/magazine/2021/september-2021/features/who-pays-allocating-liability-for-plugging-and-abandonment-costs-in-the-gom-s-ocs#:~:text=On%20average%2C%20plug-and-abandonment%20%28P%26A%29%20costs%20surge%20to%20%2410,deepwater%20well%2C%20and%20approximately%20%24500%2C000%20per%20shallow-water%20well.>) nice read if you want a preview of things to come in 30 years....  
Wind farms are being abandoned in Europe now because of cost and inefficiency, so why are we participating in the fools game?  
We have something that works, is tried and true and yet we won't build more nuclear plants because the same "environmentalists" oppose them in favor of a pig in a poke that makes them feel good, but does not work.

**Kevin Blacker** November 30, 2023 at 08:10

Report

Don't make believe offshore wind is about saving the planet. It's a farce.  
.  
They are manipulating people's fear and goodwill for profit.  
.  
Bunch of wolves. As the years go by their sheep's clothing is starting to slip off.

**ANNE NELSON** November 30, 2023 at 08:00

Report

The bottom line is, are we willing to do what it takes to save the planet? The answer appears to be no. "Perhaps no other moment in human existence has been as crucial as this one. The destiny of our planet and our civilization now rests on our shoulders. We have yet to make our choice as a society, as a civilization, as a people. We haven't stepped up to the plate. We haven't placed our bet, and rolled the hard six. But now it's time. Basically, it comes down to this: We have to choose between two versions of ourselves. Are going to be the people we have been? Selfish. Greedy. Fearful. Divided. More concerned with trivial issues than solving real problems.  
Or are we going to be the people we could be? People like our parents and grandparents — people who were courageous and selfless, who defeated fascism, raced to the moon, cured diseases, fought for moral causes, and gave us a better world? The choice is what we leave our children and future generations. <https://globalecoguv.org/making-our-choice-8e88c562af29>

**THOMAS MORIARTY** November 30, 2023 at 07:14

[Report](#)

Long, drawn out and expensive lawsuits are what keeps us from developing more nuclear power.

**KEITH J. ROBBINS** November 30, 2023 at 06:11

[Report](#)

Absolutely hilarious, the green democrats fighting with the save the view democrats, fabulous theater!

**Malcolm Jules** November 29, 2023 at 23:26

[Report](#)

Well I can't wait to see how these turbines, after 15 years handle a HARSH WINTER, shades of TEXAS come to mind.

**Chris Jawaka** November 29, 2023 at 21:58

[Report](#)

Honestly I'd rather wait and see what they look like or pictures of existing ones before I decide how in your face and ugly they might be.

—  
That said, I can't see how these would affect tourism in any way. Who plans a vacation to a beach and then decides at the last minute, "nah, lets go somewhere's else, you can see a windmill out in the ocean from there"

**Danielle Kuczowski** November 29, 2023 at 21:54

[Report](#)

I dont' mind how they look during the day. Just wish their lights weren't synchronized at night.

**Kevin Blacker** November 29, 2023 at 21:51

[Report](#)

Not sure if you are being sarcastic John. But it does take some hard thought. Unblemished ocean views are basis of high property tax. That is fact. Not make-believe like all the B.S. these overpromising, foreign companies are squawking.

.  
There isn't enough value in the electricity these wind farts produce to justify constructing them. That is why all the foreign companies are renegeing on their word and cancelling projects.

**JOHN W BILL SHEEHAN** November 29, 2023 at 20:39

[Report](#)

I guess we will find out what is more important, an unblemished ocean view or the electricity generated by the wind farm. Hmmm.

Love it

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11:01 pm

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10:59 pm

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06:01 am

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