

NEWS

Nantucket wind lawsuit on hold as feds take 2nd look at SouthCoast permit



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Cape Cod Times

- The U.S. Department of the Interior is reviewing its approval of the SouthCoast Wind project off Nantucket.
- Federal attorneys have requested a pause on a lawsuit filed by Nantucket, which the town supports.
- The review comes as other East Coast offshore wind projects face federal scrutiny and funding cuts.

In a move that could reshape the future of [SouthCoast Wind](#) — and signal deeper uncertainty for offshore wind — the U.S. Department of the Interior is reviewing its approval of the planned offshore wind farm off Nantucket. At the same time, federal attorneys want to pause the town of Nantucket’s related lawsuit while regulators revisit the permit — a shift Nantucket supports.

On Aug. 29, the U.S. Department of Justice asked the U.S. District Court for [a temporary hold on Nantucket’s appeal](#) filed over the permit. In a [Sept. 2 statement](#), town leaders said they hope the pause leads to broader changes in how offshore wind projects are approved.

“We welcome this opportunity for federal agencies to reevaluate their decision and correct course,” said Select Board member Brooke Mohr.

While Nantucket supports renewable energy and recognizes the government’s role in permitting and policy making, she noted, “the permitting for SouthCoast Wind failed to account for the significant harm the project will cause Nantucket, a federally designated National Historic Landmark.”

How big is SouthCoast Wind? Here's what's planned

Ocean Winds, a joint venture between EDP Renewables (Spain), and ENGIE (France), owns SouthCoast Wind. The 141-turbine project could generate up to 2,400 megawatts of electricity — [its first phase includes 1,287 megawatts](#), with Massachusetts procuring 1,087 megawatts and Rhode Island 200 megawatts in September 2024.

Located 20 miles south of Nantucket and 26 miles southeast of Martha's Vineyard, construction was planned to start this year, with power delivery targeted by 2030. Phase one cables would land a [Brayton Point in Somerset](#); phase two at Brayton Point or Falmouth.



Nantucket takes a stand

Nantucket filed suit in March, two months after the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management [issued the permit](#), arguing that it violated environmental and cultural protection laws and inadequately addressed its potential effects.

In its Aug. 29 filing, the justice department said it doesn't make sense to continue the lawsuit while the permit is reevaluated — something that Nantucket had been urging even before filing suit.

Cultural Heritage Partners attorney Greg Werkheiser, who is representing the town, said the case has broad implications for environmental policy.

“If agencies shortcut environmental safeguards to fast-track green energy projects, they create a dangerous precedent that allows fossil fuel developers to do the same,” he said. “The result is more — not less — environmental harm.”

Nantucket's leaders maintain it is possible “to expedite alternative energy projects while complying with environmental regulations,” as long as communities and tribal nations are not shouldering “the biggest risks of harm.”

The Department of Justice plans to submit a formal request to review SouthCoast’s permit by Sept. 18. If the review is not granted, Nantucket officials will continue their appeal.

SouthCoast Wind did not respond to a request for comment.



One of 10 projects south of the islands

SouthCoast is one of 10 offshore projects under construction or proposed south of Nantucket and Martha’s Vineyard, including Vineyard Wind 1 and 2, New England Wind 1 and 2, [Revolution Wind](#), South Fork Wind, Sunrise Wind, Starboard Wind, and Beacon Wind.

Together, these projects represent at least 918 turbines — not including [Orsted’s 1,184-megawatt Starboard project](#), proposed in March 2024, for which turbine numbers have not been announced.

The justice department’s renewed scrutiny of SouthCoast comes as federal agencies take a more cautious approach to offshore wind.

On Aug. 22, BOEM issued a [stop-work order for the nearly-complete Revolution Wind](#) project. Days later, on Aug. 29, the U.S. Department of Transportation cancelled funding for several offshore wind-related infrastructure projects — including nearly \$34 million to build an offshore wind terminal on a vacant industrial site in Salem.

Revolution Wind has been under construction 14 miles southwest of Martha's Vineyard, with some turbines visible from Aquinnah. Its cables land in North Kingston, Rhode Island.

In a letter to the company, BOEM said the stop-work order was prompted by concerns raised in the broader offshore wind review President Trump requested in [a January 2025 executive order](#). The agency cited national security and the need to ensure the project doesn't interfere with other ocean activities like shipping and fishing.

According to an Aug. 25 statement, Revolution Wind — tagged to deliver 400 megawatts to Rhode Island and 304 to Connecticut — is 80% finished, with 45 of 65 turbines installed. Orsted is evaluating the financial effects of the work pause and considering possible litigation.

Five East Coast governors push back

Gov. Maura Healey, meanwhile, called the cut to Salem's port project funding "a slap in the face" to workers, eliminating 800 construction jobs "and jobs that would've been created in the future," she said in an Aug. 29 statement.

On Sept. 1, Healey joined governors Kathy Hochul (New York), Ned Lamont (Connecticut), Dan McKee (Rhode Island), and Phil Murphy (New Jersey) in urging the administration to "uphold all offshore wind permits already granted and allow these projects to be constructed," warning that reversing course jeopardizes thousands of jobs and wastes "years of progress and ceding leadership to foreign competitors."

The governors stressed offshore wind's role in diversifying energy resources alongside nuclear, natural gas, hydropower and other renewables. They warned that canceling permitted projects "sends the message to investors that work can be stopped on a whim," risking financing and increasing costs for taxpayers.

Critics stand their ground

Critics continue to raise concerns about offshore wind's effects on marine ecosystems, fisheries, and human health, including risks from transmission lines and the potential for contamination from turbine and transformer oil spills. Additionally, they argue that expensive grid upgrades could increase energy costs.

Nantucket leaders point to similar safety and environmental concerns, and cite the 2024 Vineyard Wind turbine blade failure as an example of how projects could have far-reaching effects on the ocean and coastal communities. Ultimately, they said, the government's commitment to revisiting permits offers a chance to address these issues before projects proceed.

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