



The offshore substation that each of Vineyard Wind 1's 62 turbines will connect to (right) is seen on Aug. 1, 2023. At left is the "cable lay vessel" Giulio Verne, which connected the wind farm's export cable to the substation.

Nantucket Demands Accountability from Vineyard Wind Amid Offshore Wind Challenges

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BY COLIN A. YOUNG, State House News Service

Just before a parade of advocates touted the potential of offshore wind power at the State House, elected officials in the town closest to the only project currently in the state's pipeline said the pursuit of wind has been "way more impactful" and "much more detrimental" than originally expected.

The Nantucket Select Board met Tuesday morning and [issued a litany of demands](#) of the Vineyard Wind 1 project under construction about 15 miles off the island's south shore. Town officials accused the project developed by Avangrid Renewables and Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners of chronic communication failures, stalled implementation of light pollution mitigation, and a lack of emergency planning. The town gave the developers two weeks to agree to conditions that include potential financial penalties and a pledge to cease future project development if "any future incident" forces Nantucket to close its beaches more than a certain number of days.

The town's public demands of Vineyard Wind come just more than two weeks after it reached [a \\$10.5 million settlement](#) with GE Vernova, the company that manufactured the wind turbine blade that failed on the Vineyard Wind project in July 2024, littering Nantucket's beaches and waters with foam, fiberglass and other debris.

The town said Nantucket's Select Board "pointedly refused to include Vineyard Wind as a signatory" to that settlement due to "the company's lack of leadership, transparency, and stewardship" following that blade failure. Board member Brooke Mohr said Tuesday that she's noticed a change in Vineyard Wind since the blade failure and the return of a federal administration antagonistic to offshore wind under President Donald Trump.

"Since the immediate aftermath of the blade failure and since the last presidential election, Vineyard Wind's leadership has essentially gone into hiding. We believe that they are concerned about the change in policy at the federal level and drawing scrutiny from the new administration, which has ordered a review of offshore wind permitting practices," Mohr, who was board chair at the time of last summer's blade failure, said. "However, hiding is not the solution to their problems, nor is it the solution to our problems. In fact, as evidenced today by this press conference, it has the opposite intended effect — we are and have had no choice but to go public."

Late Tuesday afternoon, Vineyard Wind circulated a statement that did not address the town's specific demands. The company said it agreed to this month's settlement "that resolved all claims and any harms related to the 2024 blade incident," though the [settlement provided by the town](#) names only GE Vernova and Nantucket as parties to it.

"Following the conclusion of the settlement process, Vineyard Wind has anticipated resuming traditional communications and coordination with the Town in a manner that supports a productive dialogue. Vineyard Wind believes the settlement represents a fair and conclusive outcome for all parties, and hopes the Town of Nantucket will move forward in the spirit of that settlement and work together towards a constructive, positive relationship," the statement said.

The first offshore wind project of its scale permitted in the United States, Vineyard Wind 1 has advanced its 62-turbine project quietly over the last year. Project officials had been mum about its power exports, but word came from a parent company last week that Vineyard Wind 1 was [exporting power from 17 turbines](#) with an expectation that construction of the 800-megawatt project will be completed by the end of the year.

Beacon Hill policymakers have written ambitious offshore wind power plans into law and are counting on Vineyard Wind 1 (as well as future projects the state has struggled to lock down) to help Massachusetts meet its decarbonization requirements. But as many state

officeholders focus on the statewide benefits of offshore wind, residents in Nantucket and Barnstable have made clear that there can also be downsides for host communities.

“Vineyard Wind has repeatedly failed to meet three fundamental obligations to our community. First, by refusing to timely and fully communicate critical details about their massive industrial project just off our coast, they’ve kept Nantucket and its residents in the dark, which endangers the public and undermines trust. Second, due to lengthy delays in their activation of the required lighting reduction system on their turbines, they’ve been polluting our night sky with dozens of blinking red lights for several years now. Third, by failing to timely include Nantucket in any new emergency response planning in the aftermath of the blade failure, they increase the likelihood that they will again be unprepared for a disaster.”

Repeatedly Tuesday, Nantucket officials said the offshore wind project was in violation of a [2020 community benefit agreement](#) that Greg Werkheiser, a lawyer from Cultural Heritage Partners who represents the town in offshore wind matters, said “requires clear and proactive communications from Vineyard Wind at and about every stage of the project, from development to deployment to operations and maintenance.”

“We are here today because the company has repeatedly failed to fulfill the communications obligations of the CBA during times of both regular operations and, critically, during times of emergencies,” he said. Also at issue is the delay in full functionality of a required system that prevents the red aircraft warning lights atop each turbine from blinking unless an aircraft is detected nearby on radar.

Mohr said the so-called Good Neighbor Agreement has been “a hotly-debated topic in our community.” Asked by a reporter Tuesday whether she would sign that 2020 agreement again knowing what she does now, Select Board Chair Dawn Hill said she would not.

“It’s been way more impactful, you know, not to mention the fact that some of the benefits were to the [Nantucket Preservation Trust],” Hill said. “This is much more detrimental than it should have been.”

A few hours after Nantucket laid out its demands, offshore wind bills got a hearing at the State House. One popular subject of testimony was legislation that would create an offshore wind supply chain commission, incentivize communities that host clean energy infrastructure facilities that support the deployment of offshore wind, and both delay and double the state’s offshore wind procurement target (from 5,600 MW by June 30, 2027, to 11,200 MW by June 30, 2035).

Casey Bowers, vice president of government relations for the Environmental League of Massachusetts, said “we can all admit offshore wind is not in the same place it was” when

the state began its pursuit of the clean energy but that it “remains the biggest lever we can pull to reach our climate targets.”

“Massachusetts must continue to lead on offshore wind if we are to realize our goal of a healthier future, while protecting wildlife, uplifting workers, and ensuring no community is left behind,” she said. “ELM is committed to helping Massachusetts build a robust supply chain and a protected labor force as we increase our ambition for responsibly developed offshore wind.”