



"Nantucket-08-2004" by The original uploader was Bobak at English Wikipedia. is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.5.

## Nantucket Settlement Over Wind Turbine Blade Detachment Doesn't End Dissatisfaction

3 months ago Carolyn Fortuna 22 Comments

*Support CleanTechnica's work through a [Substack subscription](#) or on [Stripe](#).*

Nantucket officials are not happy with Vineyard Wind. Feeling vulnerable after last summer's turbine blade detachment, they've delivered 15 demands to the developer. The complaints include dissatisfaction with turbines' lights and not including Nantucket in its emergency plans.

What we have here is a failure to communicate.

Last summer seemed a time of promise for the offshore wind industry. Turbine installations [were moving along](#) at Vineyard Wind. As the nation's first commercial scale offshore wind farm, all was good. Vineyard Wind alone would provide [804 megawatts of energy](#) — enough to power around 400,000 homes in Massachusetts. The project would be a key marker for Massachusetts as it moved toward net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Future offshore wind projects would only accentuate renewable energy provided to the grid. [Fossil power?](#) It could be a distant memory.

And then a turbine blade broke. Shards of foam, fiberglass, and other items scattered into the ocean. The detritus entered the water table, settled on the ocean floor, and littered Nantucket's beaches for months. Hand it to the Nantucket youth: lifeguards plunged into the surf to clear fragments as they rolled onto the shoreline. Many community members joined in the effort, too.

It wasn't a good look or feel for the summer community. "They had no idea it was going to be a constant wave of debris," Nantucket select board member Brooke Mohr remembered, as [reported](#) by the *Boston Globe*. Like many northern communities, only the last two weeks of July and the first two weeks of August are idyllic: clear blue skies, full sun, beach frolicking. Yet there was no choice. In that tiny window of high season weather that is island life in New England, Nantucket had to close its beaches. It was a shock to the community, which relies on tourism for much of its annual revenue.

## Tensions over Offshore Wind

The first offshore wind problems emerged about [20 years ago](#) in the area with Cape Wind, a project that failed to gain momentum in Massachusetts waters. In the last decade, [offshore wind](#) threatened fossil power dominance in New England. Well-funded politicians have fought the clean energy transition ever since, and offshore wind has become a marker of misinformation campaigns and roiling controversies.

Revolution Wind, which is set to deliver 704 megawatts to Rhode Island and Connecticut, is another area offshore wind project. It has not been able to meet its [original 2025 target](#) due to delays over an onshore substation. The new completion date is 2026.

Then Trump 2.0 upended everything clean energy. Administration lies include whale deaths as a result of offshore wind, although marine scientists point out that such deaths primarily happen due to collisions with cargo ships. Permitting and leasing for other offshore wind projects have essentially collapsed. The future of the clean energy industry is suddenly uncertain.

## The Nantucket Settlement, Ongoing Concerns

Investigations into the wind turbine blade failure revealed insufficient bonding in the manufacturing process. It seems that plant managers had pushed employees to accelerate their pace to meet deadlines and quotas; that led to less thorough checks-and-balances. GE Vernova, the turbine manufacturer, fired or suspended several workers at the Quebec plant. *Bad robots*.

Other blades that were produced at the same Quebec facility were removed from the Vineyard Wind site off Nantucket.

Fast forward one year after the wind turbine blade debacle. Nantucket officials [have announced](#) a \$10.5 million settlement with GE Vernova. The deal between Nantucket and GE Vernova includes the creation of a fund to compensate for economic harm.

Under the agreement, Nantucket will establish a Community Claims Fund and will engage a professional, independent third-party administrator to evaluate claims from local businesses and issue payments. Greg Werkheiser of Cultural Heritage Partners, legal counsel to Town for offshore wind matters, stated, "Federal law limits localities' influence in the design and approval of offshore wind projects, but communities have rights when it comes to safe operations of the farms." The 2020 permitting process for Vineyard Wind fell under federal law that did not offer local governments the power of veto. However, Nantucket did negotiate a community benefits agreement that is enforceable in court.

The project developer, Vineyard Wind, the offshore energy project's developer, is owned by Denmark-based Avangrid Renewables and Copenhagen Infrastructure in partnership with Spain-based Iberdrola. Vineyard Wind is not included in the settlement agreement, which also precluded it and GE Vernova from future litigation related to the blade failure.

The settlement has not placated Nantucket town officials, who [continue to voice displeasure](#) with Vineyard Wind and want more transparency.

One area of continued tension is what Nantucket officials see as an unfulfilled promise to complete a nighttime lighting reduction system on the turbines out in the water. As required in the original agreement, the developer had to install an "automatic detection and lighting system," which only turns on lights when it detects a plane or ship in the vicinity. That system was supposed to be in place before commercial operations began. Of the 62 turbines at the project completion, only 25 turbines are using the light-dimming system. In its demands, the town said Vineyard Wind should compensate Nantucket with \$25,000 per turbine to reflect each day that the turbine lights shine without activating this system.

Among [other failures](#) town officials perceive are Vineyard Wind's inability "to communicate regularly, clearly, and honestly with the Town at all stages of project development and deployment." Also, a promise to engage Nantucket in new emergency response planning has not been fully realized.

## Nantucket's Accountability Demands of Vineyard Wind

- Text emergency notifications to designated Town officials within 1 hour.
- Alert the same officials when blade monitors detect anomalies.
- Share with Nantucket the content of any written communications with or from federal agencies regarding project failures that have impacts on Nantucket.
- Email detailed monthly project updates to the Select Board and Town Manager.
- Present updates and take public questions at Select Board meetings upon request and no less than quarterly.
- Respond to written questions from the Select Board within 3 business days.
- Provide relevant project reports within 1 week of submission to any agency.
- Share all studies or data reports on adverse effects within 5 business days of receipt.
- Disclose correspondence with regulatory agencies within 15 business days.
- Notify the Town if the company is asserting any confidentiality claims to shield public disclosure of reports or data in regulatory filings.
- Pay liquidated damages (\$250,000) per violation of the above communication protocols.
- Pay liquidated damages (\$25,000) per turbine per day) for each day that turbine lights are on without the Aircraft Detection and Lighting System (ADLS) being active.
- Within 2 months, initiate a process to seek public input on new emergency response plans—including blade failure scenarios.
- Establish and maintain a \$10 million escrow fund to ensure coverage of cleanup costs from future failures.
- Permanently suspend new projects if any future incident forces beach closures or shellfish harvesting bans for 7 consecutive days or 14 total days in any 6-month period.

*Sign up for [CleanTechnica's Weekly Substack for Zach and Scott's in-depth analyses and high level summaries](#), [sign up for our daily newsletter](#), and [follow us on Google News!](#)*