

The Madaket Wind Project

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: How might the wind turbine affect birds and protected species, and what is the Town doing to check the impacts?

A: The proposed site of the wind turbine, at the Town's DPW compound and waste management facility on Madaket Road, is disturbed land that has been developed and used for waste management purposes since the first parcel was purchased in 1959. The properties have been surveyed for presence of protected and endangered species, but, unlike many other locations on Nantucket, have not been designated as Estimated or Priority Habitat. Nonetheless, the Town has engaged in a sustained effort to evaluate the potential impacts of the wind turbine on birds and protected species, and to ensure that significant impacts are mitigated or avoided. Those measures include:

1. A comprehensive Phase I study to identify birds and species of concern, which was funded by the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center and completed in 2010 by a third-party consultant, Normandeau Associates. That study is available on the wind project website at <http://www.ackenergy.org/WindStudies.html>.
2. Consultations with the US Fish and Wildlife Service regional office (the USFWS), the Massachusetts Natural Heritage Endangered Species Program (NHESP) office, and the Massachusetts Fish and Wildlife Service, to learn of their concerns and identify additional information to be acquired. Correspondence with the agencies and a report on the consultations are also on the wind project website.
3. Survey of literature regarding how bird species of concern, including long-tailed ducks, which fly north-to-south and back on a daily basis in large numbers in the area of the western end of Nantucket in late fall, react to the presence of wind turbines in other locations.
4. Field surveys of the presence of birds at the Madaket sites, including specific surveys of the presence and activities of long-tailed ducks, winter birds and breeding birds. The long-tailed duck survey is being conducted by a local resident, Edith Ray, pursuant to a protocol developed by Sarah Barnum, PhD, of Normandeau Associates after the consultation with the USFWS and the NHESP. Similarly, the winter bird survey is being conducted by a former island resident, Robert Kennedy, pursuant to a protocol developed by Normandeau Associates after the consultation with the USFWS and the NHESP. The breeding bird survey will be conducted in the spring.
5. A commitment to conduct post-construction monitoring surveys of bird activity pursuant to a reviewed protocol in order to evaluate actual impacts of the turbine project. The Town is also committed to implement mitigation measures in accordance with a conservation and management plan if necessary.

Finally, the Town undertook ground surveys to delineate the wetlands at the eastern edge of Long Pond in areas adjacent to one of the proposed locations for the turbine (the site of the old radio tower). On the basis of those delineations, which were reviewed and accepted by the Town Conservation Commission, the Town intends to move the proposed site for one turbine back further away from the eastern end of Long Pond in order to stay out of the wetlands buffer zone.

Additional information on the results of the field surveys will be release as it is developed and analyzed.