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Opinion

## Impact of offshore wind on fisheries unknown

**By Mary Newton Lima**

Posted at 3:01 AM

I write in response to “Economic, environmental benefits power offshore wind” (My View, Nov. 5). Offshore wind is an exciting, viable and potentially productive source of electricity. But building these wind farms may significantly affect the existing blue economy, and the job numbers the authors cite are misleadingly high.

Fishing is an integral part of the blue economy, but the planned offshore wind development will affect over 100,000 acres of ocean currently used by fishermen to sustain the very industry the authors applaud. Once the Rhode Island/Massachusetts wind energy area is fully built out, an area of roughly 1,418 square miles – vastly larger than Cape Cod – will be covered in turbines roughly a mile apart. How this will affect fisheries is unknown. Many commercial fishermen in Europe will not, or cannot, fish within the farms because of safety hazards and the potential damage to or loss of gear.

Additionally, the full baseline studies that are desperately needed to examine the impacts on the ocean environment and the fishing industry are neither being presented by the developers nor required by the federal government. Placing hundreds of turbines in the ocean floor will no doubt change the ecology of the area and could either chase away commercially important species or make it so fishermen can no longer catch the species they’ve relied on for generations.

What’s really upsetting is the authors are misrepresenting the number of jobs coming to Massachusetts. The authors state “nearly 10,000 jobs will be created during the construction phase” of Vineyard Wind and the next three wind farms to be built. This sounds like nearly 10,000 permanent jobs are coming to Cape Cod and the South Coast. This is not the case. While the authors don’t identify the “recent report” they cite, the 2018 Massachusetts Offshore Wind Workforce

Assessment estimated a range of 6,878 and 9,852 job-years (not jobs) would be created during the construction phase (which includes the design and permitting, not just construction). Let's break this down.

Job-years are not the same as jobs. The term "job-year" is an economic term that equals one year of full-time employment. So, 20 job-years can be one job that exists for 20 years, 40 temporary half-time jobs, 20 one-year construction jobs, etc.

Not all job-years are permanent or pay well. Out of the nearly 10,000 job-years projected, only about one third (2,279-3,171) will be job-years directly related to building the wind farm. The rest of the job-years are "indirect" (hinging on the hope that supply chain companies will open factories for turbine construction within driving distance from Cape Cod) or "induced" (extra personnel hired at hotels, convenience stores, etc). Job-years at these factories and hotels will be not be high-paying and may not be permanent.

"Construction phase" includes design and permitting, not just construction. Those 2,279-3,171 direct job-years include not only construction jobs, but also designers, engineers, permitters, lawyers, and scientists, many of whom already work for the offshore wind companies. This is not job creation; it is job certainty for their workforce.

Finally, we have no guarantee any of these jobs are or will be located in New England, let alone between "New Bedford and Cape Cod" as the writers imply. None of the offshore wind development companies are U.S. companies (although most or all have offices here), meaning some of these job-year jobs could go overseas.

Fishing is an important and sustainable part of the existing Cape Cod blue economy. Offshore wind is a necessary and sustainable renewable energy source that we support. We need to find solutions that allow both of these important industries to flourish.

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