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**Subject:** New Bedford as Staging Area Article in 8/1 Globe (UNCLASSIFIED)  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 01, 2012 9:09:47 AM

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Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

Caveats: NONE

FYI. You may have already noticed this article on potential staging areas for offshore wind projects.

[http://www.boston.com/business/articles/2012/08/01/new\\_bedford\\_seeks\\_a\\_wind\\_power\\_niche/?page=2](http://www.boston.com/business/articles/2012/08/01/new_bedford_seeks_a_wind_power_niche/?page=2)

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# Old port, new energy

New Bedford aims to establish itself as the go-to site for assembling equipment for offshore wind farms, but there's apt to be plenty of competition



Mayor Jon Mitchell walks on New Bedford's hurricane dike near the proposed location (in background) of a wind-energy staging facility. (Globe Staff Photo / John Tlumacki)

By D.C. Denison  
Globe Staff / August 1, 2012



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NEW BEDFORD — Today, it is a 28-acre field with a dramatic waterfront view of New Bedford Harbor and its picture-postcard lighthouse. But within a few years, and with \$35 million in public funds, city officials plan to convert the site into a bustling hub with hundreds of workers assembling giant wind turbines and loading them on ships bound for Cape Wind, the Nantucket Sound wind farm, and eventually for even larger offshore wind energy developments.

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### Opportunity in the wind

Mitchell.

As proposals for wind farms off the coast of New England proliferate, New Bedford is hoping to capitalize on one very specific part of this alternative energy puzzle: the need for a waterfront facility where giant turbine components can be organized, assembled, and delivered to sites miles from land. The idea is to create hundreds, and potentially thousands, of high-paying jobs.

“We want to establish ourselves as the go-to port for wind energy assembly,” said Mayor Jon

The problem: competition from other port locations that are eyeing the same opportunity, including Quonset Point on Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island and sites in Delaware and New Jersey.

And then there is the uncertain future of offshore wind energy. The industry has struggled to surmount not only regulatory and environmental hurdles but competition from lower-cost energy sources, conventional as well as sustainable.

“There’s absolutely a need for port-based support for wind energy, but the real question is how big the offshore wind opportunity will turn out to be,” said Matt Kaplan, an analyst at IHS Emerging Energy Research in Cambridge.

In late 2010, Governor Deval Patrick revealed that Cape Wind had chosen New Bedford — with a population just under 100,000, it is the sixth-largest city in Massachusetts — as its staging area. The planned New Bedford Marine Commerce Terminal would be built with \$35 million in state and federal funds, and construction would be managed by the state and the quasipublic Massachusetts Clean Energy Center.

The optimism of New Bedford officials has been fed by the experience of German ports like Bremerhaven and Cuxhaven, which have established themselves as the staging areas for North Sea wind energy projects.

“Each of those German ports has gained over 2,000 jobs,” Mitchell said. “It starts with assembly and loading ships, but it grows into supply chain, transportation, accountants, lawyers, and so on.”

City officials also say they have a headstart.

New Bedford has a thriving fishing industry — it is currently the number one US seaport in terms of annual revenue from fishing — and a working waterfront that already hosts extensive truck depots, repair facilities, and loading docks. Those assets can be easily tapped for wind turbine assembly and delivery, they said.

However, New Bedford’s nearby competitor for wind energy staging, Quonset Point, is also well situated.

It will be developed by Deepwater Wind, a Providence company that has numerous offshore wind project proposals in the Northeast.

The company currently has a lease option on a 65-acre site and a commitment from Rhode Island officials that Quonset Point will be the staging area for a small five-turbine facility in Block Island Sound. Construction on that project is scheduled to begin in late 2013.

Despite any potential competition, Jeff Grybowski, senior vice president for strategy and external affairs at Deepwater Wind, said that he is an enthusiastic supporter of New Bedford’s proposed expansion. The reason: There is enough opportunity to go around, he said.

Over the past few years, numerous offshore areas, in both state and federal waters, have been identified as possible wind farm sites. If these projects leave the drawing board, hundreds more wind turbines will be built within range of the two sites.

“We think it’s likely that we will need multiple ports, both Quonset Point and New Bedford,” Grybowski said.

That sentiment is echoed by Edward Anthes-Washburn, the acting executive director of the Port of New Bedford. He said there is potentially enough business for not only Quonset Point and New Bedford but also for proposed

facilities in Delaware and New Jersey.

“One thing we learned from Europe is that there are multiple activities that suit different ports in the offshore wind industry,” he said. “There will be plenty of work to go around for ports with the right infrastructure.”

The timetable for the development of so many offshore wind projects stretches out for decades.

In the meantime, there is Cape Wind, with 130 turbines planned. It has promised to be New Bedford’s first customer if a facility is completed in time for the launch of construction, scheduled for next year.

“We are optimistic that New Bedford can complete their project in time for our use,” said Mark Rodgers, Cape Wind spokesman.

But to meet that deadline, Mitchell said, the city needs to keep pushing ahead with the harbor project.

The next hurdle: The proposal needs to be cleared by the Environmental Protection Agency, which has jurisdiction over dredging projects in New Bedford Harbor because it is a federal Superfund site, thanks to previous industrial pollution. The EPA is conducting a 30-day public comment period on the plan before issuing a ruling.

New Bedford officials also have to arrange more land swaps with property owners.

And the city will probably have to go back to the state for more than the original \$35 million to complete the project once construction starts, Mitchell said.

But he is confident it will be worth it.

“Offshore wind is going to generate explosive job growth,” he said. “The goal is to maximize the yield of this new industry to New Bedford.”

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