



The Nantucket Maria Mitchell Association's Offshore Wind Policy Statement

The Nantucket Maria Mitchell Association (MMA) was founded in honor of Nantucket native astronomer, naturalist, librarian, and educator Maria Mitchell. Nantucket is a unique place. The Milky Way remains visible with the naked eye – something that has become a rarity across the United States, particularly the east coast. The unique environment that Nantucket offers, whether it be land, sea, or sky, is a key component of our mission. Through public engagement, education, and research, we uphold Maria Mitchell's "learning by doing" approach, with astronomy at the center of this work.

We recognize the importance of renewable energy and the crucial need to address climate change through sustainable infrastructure. However, we are concerned about the light pollution associated with offshore wind turbines proposed and constructed near Nantucket. Improperly managed lighting has the potential to harm our ability to observe the night sky, directly impacting our education and astronomical research programs at the MMA.

The Vineyard Wind case emphasizes the seriousness of this issue. In the 2020 Good Neighbor Agreement (GNA), Vineyard Wind committed to implementing Aircraft Detection Lighting Systems (ADLS) to limit turbine lighting to activation in the presence of an aircraft. This would result in an estimated average of less than five hours of lighting per year. However, Vineyard Wind did not successfully implement the ADLS system until July 2025, leading to a breach of the GNA. This lack of commitment to original agreements prompted the MMA to withdraw from the GNA on October 8, 2024, and raises concerns that other developers may have similar delays to the implementation of ADLS.

In addition to our primary concern about light pollution, our broader environmental concerns regarding offshore wind development include the impacts on marine mammals; migratory patterns of birds, insects, and marine life; oceanic ecosystems; and disruptions to the local economy and community welfare. Still, as an organization built on the foundation of astronomy and education, our greatest apprehension stems from the potential degradation of Nantucket's dark sky.

We urge developers and regulatory agencies to consider the cumulative impacts of the offshore wind farms, rather than solely examining individual cases. We also call for the implementation of successful ADLS systems that limit impacts on the dark sky and uphold the original agreements made in the GNA. Increased transparency and accountability from offshore wind developers are necessary to achieve sustainable development goals while also preserving the values of local Nantucket organizations and the island as a historical district.