

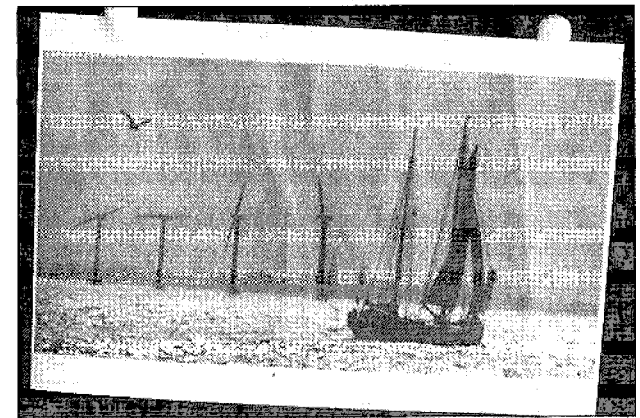
Wind turbines leave Shore residents leery

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE (AP) — A state panel formed to weigh the benefits of windmills off the New Jersey coast held its first public meeting Thursday, getting an earful from residents and elected officials leery about the structures' potential impact on commercial fishing, tourism and migrating birds. Proponents say wind energy is a badly needed alternative to coal, natural gas and nuclear power, but all but one of the people who spoke

to the nine-member panel had more practical concerns. They said the presence of giant windmills offshore could kill birds, restrict fishing, ruin ocean vistas and interfere with aviation. The recurring theme was a fear that the windmills would somehow affect tourism, which sustains the coastal communities along the Jersey Shore. "We lose our ability to make money on tourism, then where are we?" said Gilbert

Ewing, of Cape May, a retired commercial fisherman. The panel — formally named the New Jersey Blue Ribbon Panel on Development of Wind Turbine Facilities in Coastal Waters — was appointed by acting Gov. Richard J. Codey when he imposed a 15-month moratorium on offshore wind energy projects. It is to consider the economic and environmental effects of wind energy, assess its feasibility for meeting

New Jersey's long-term needs and compare the construction of wind farms with other energy sources. Located three to seven miles offshore, the wind farms would consist of turbines mounted on poles hundreds of feet high sunk into the ocean floor, with blades catching the wind and transmitting the energy to an on-shore electric substation. The next meeting is Tuesday in the Toms River section of Dover Township.



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO
A picture of a wind project in the Netherlands gives Cape May Court House residents a glimpse Thursday of how proposed wind farms on the Jersey Shore may look.

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