

## William Cundiff

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**Subject:** falmouth

[The Falmouth Experience: The Green Debate | Climatide](#)

# Climatide

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*Because of its strong winds, Cape Cod is a crucial part of Governor Patrick's plan to generate enough electricity in the state to power 800,000 homes. But as Sean Corcoran reports, the effort to install land-based wind turbines on the Cape has slowed, largely because of opposition to a turbine that was installed last spring in Falmouth. This is part four in our week-long series, **The Falmouth Experience: The Trouble With One Town's Turbine.***

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## **The Falmouth Experience, Part 4: The Green Debate**

*Reported by Sean Corcoran*

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Sean Corcoran/WGBH

*Liz Argo is a well-known wind advocate and consultant on Cape Cod. She videotapes interviews with people who live and work near wind turbines; here, she's seen in Hyannis Country Gardens.*

FALMOUTH, Mass. — Liz Argo is probably the best-known wind advocate and turbine consultant on Cape Cod. She's been involved with proposals in Brewster, Dennis and at the high school on Nantucket. And for the past 10 years, Argo has been taking her video camera along to interview people who live and work near turbines. She says the responses are almost always positive.

Argo stands a few hundred yards from a 156-foot tall wind turbine as she interviews Diana Duffly, treasurer of Hyannis Country Garden, the first business to put up a turbine on Cape Cod.

"Why don't you start looking at it and turn back to me and tell me, 'Since we put it in we had this issue, that issue, this good thing, that bad thing...'" Argo says.

Duffly begins: "We installed the turbine, it went online in 2009."

But since that installation two years ago, Argo says the wind debate has shifted on the Cape. "What happened in Falmouth has very definitely made doing any well-sited wind project nearly impossible right now on Cape Cod," Argo said.

Last spring, the town of Falmouth turned on the first of two 400-foot turbines at its wastewater treatment plant in a quiet, wooded area of west Falmouth. And, almost immediately, **some residents began to complain**. Neighbors say noise from the turbine **causes headaches and wakes them up at night**.

Argo and members of a wind advocacy group called the Cape and Islands Wind Information Network were skeptical, and they went to talk to the neighbors. "Meeting with those people quite honestly blew our minds," Argo said. "We had expected that they would be kind of wacky. And we would be able to dismiss them. And none of us will dismiss their complaints now."

As communities on Cape Cod consider wind proposals, and a county-wide planning committee considers new siting standards, Falmouth has loomed large in the discussions. Before the 1.65-megawatt turbine was turned on, there were virtually no Cape Codders with experience living near a turbine of that size. Turbine complaints came from mostly far-off places such as Europe and New



Jess Bidgood/WGBH

*Wind One rises up over the trees in one Falmouth neighborhood, creating a shadow-flicker that has caused neighbors there to complain. Other Falmouth residents report health problems caused by the turbine's noise.*

Zealand. Now people from Falmouth have their own experiences, and their stories are impacting debates in other communities.

Barry Funfar lives about 1,600 feet from Falmouth's turbine. He says he travels to other towns to talk about the aches and the pressure he feels in his head when outside in his yard. "When I went up to Plymouth, I said, I kind of feel like Paul Revere coming up here to warn you what it is like living by one of these," Funfar said.

Wind advocates like Argo seem to be distancing themselves from the Falmouth project. While they point out that the turbine is an older one that was in storage for several years, they question its location just a few hundred yards from neighbors. "What went wrong in Falmouth I think, unfortunately, (is that) those turbines probably didn't belong in that neighborhood," Argo said.

If Argo is the most recognized pro-wind advocate on Cape Cod, then Eric Bibler, of the group WINDWISE, is likely the most visible opponent. Bibler says that what's happening in Falmouth could happen in any town. And that the response to Falmouth should not be to simply call it an anomaly. "What we constantly hear in these other projects is this is not about Falmouth, that Falmouth is unique," Bibler said. "That Falmouth is bad technology."

Last week, Falmouth officials told neighbors they're willing to shut off the turbine when winds hit higher velocities. But Bibler says the only real solution may be to compensate the neighbors. "They may just have to buy these people out, which is not what they want. They don't want to move. They just want their lives back."

It took eight years of town discussion before Falmouth's first turbine went online last spring. The delay wasn't because of heated opposition. Instead it took state and federal grants and incentive programs to make community wind economical.

Cities and towns across the state are now interested in turbines as a way to get stable energy prices with reduced environmental impacts. But on Cape Cod, what's called the "Falmouth experience" has left a string of turbine proposals in limbo.

*Don't miss extended interviews with [Liz Argo](#) and [Eric Bibler](#).*

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