

## Partners on Savings, Resiliency, and Jobs for an Island Community

### A Case Study in Offshore Wind Development

For Vineyard Wind 1, the island of Martha's Vineyard always loomed large. Located midway between Cape Cod and the project's lease area, Martha's Vineyard is 15 miles from the project site. As a close neighbor of Vineyard Wind 1, the island community would necessarily have a critical role to play in public acceptance of the nation's first commercial-scale offshore wind development. But Martha's Vineyard played an even bigger role in – and has received significant benefits from – Vineyard Wind 1 through a unique community partnership formed even before the project had a site.

In 2015, Vineyard Wind signed the nation's first offshore wind Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) with the nonprofit Vineyard Power Cooperative. Under the CBA, Vineyard Power became a Community Benefits Organization for the purposes of the first auction of offshore lease areas by the federal government, providing support for Vineyard Wind in its bid for a lease and working with Vineyard Wind to develop a program of economic and other benefits for the island and its residents.

As the only bidder with a signed CBA, Vineyard Wind won its lease, earning a 10% discount on price, and began a long-term relationship with Vineyard Power that has paid off in customized benefits for Martha's Vineyard. These benefits include energy savings for income-eligible ratepayers; distributed



Commemorating the partnership with Vineyard Power

energy and battery storage projects to improve resiliency; infrastructure investments, including modernizing the Tisbury working waterfront; a direct role in project development enabling community concerns to be registered and addressed and for the community to get direct information as the project evolved; and long-term, year-round jobs.

Though unique in its particulars, the Martha's Vineyard story is representative of the Vineyard method of offshore wind development – community engagement through collaborative partnerships.



Vineyard Offshore and Vineyard Power teams at office opening

## A Community Partnership

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Central to the Martha's Vineyard story is the Vineyard Power Cooperative. Formed in 2009, the nonprofit Vineyard Power has a mission to promote local, renewable sources of electricity while enhancing resiliency of critical facilities on the island and ensuring access for all residents and business. With a vision of 100% renewable energy for Martha's Vineyard by 2040 – a goal that has been formally adopted by all six towns on the island – Vineyard Power sought to capture the benefits of offshore wind for the island community.

Under the CBA, Vineyard Power took responsibility for educating the public about offshore wind and building project support, while ensuring the project received direct community feedback. Involved in every aspect of permitting, Vineyard Power supported and led key portions of Vineyard Wind's community and stakeholder outreach. These efforts resulted in overwhelming support for the project. Of the 13,260 written comments submitted in the final federal review, 80% supported the project. All six towns on Martha's Vineyard submitted letters of support, which the state cited as an important consideration of its acceptance of the Vineyard Wind 1 project.



Vineyard Power Logo



## Year-Round Jobs for a Seasonal Economy

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In the eight years of partnership to date, Vineyard Wind and Vineyard Power have worked collaboratively to define and deliver a custom-designed set of community benefits for Martha's Vineyard under the CBA.

These benefits start with jobs. Three job fairs held in various locations on the island introduced residents to all the key contractors that would be working on the project and the jobs they would have available.

In addition, operations and maintenance (O&M) for Vineyard Wind 1 was to be based at Vineyard Haven, in the town of Tisbury. With Vineyard Haven harbor already providing commercial services to island residents, including year-round ferry and freight service, the offshore wind support facility will add a new dimension to the island's working waterfront and maritime industry.



In spring of 2023, construction began on the O&M facility, which will support 90 jobs for the 25+ year life of the project. These positions involve a range of occupations: wind turbine technicians, site managers, planners, helicopter pilots, crew transfer vessel support staff, and health, safety, and environmental managers. What's more, the project has committed to having the facility fully staffed by island residents within five years.

To that end, Vineyard Power collaborated with Bristol Community College and Adult Continuing Education of Martha's Vineyard to provide a remote Offshore Wind Technician Training Certificate program for island residents, with Vineyard Wind providing funding through the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center. A majority of the first class of trainees recruited by Vineyard Power were working seasonal jobs and saw the certificate training as a way to gain year-round, consistent employment. Vineyard Wind also provided scholarships to three local fishermen to study for the certificate.

## Bill Savings and Resiliency Investments

Vineyard Wind's commitment to Martha's Vineyard did not end with O&M jobs. For all the communities on the South Coast, Cape Cod, and the islands affected by the project, Vineyard Wind 1 provided a Resiliency and Affordability Program (RAP). With funding of \$15 million over 15 years, RAP consists of two interrelated components: electric rate relief for income-eligible households and investments in distributed solar and battery storage projects to make critical facilities on the island more resilient against extreme weather and climate change.

Fully half of that funding - \$7.5 million over 15 years - is allocated to Martha's Vineyard, delivered through the Vineyard Power partnership. For approximately

"I was able to study everything here on the island, while working," said **Charlie Rice, one of the first General Electric local hires as an entry-level offshore wind turbine technician.** "There are year-round jobs on the island but most of them are seasonal, so to have something stable like this is huge."



As UMass Dartmouth's economic analysis for Vineyard Wind 1 notes, the "steady and well-paying jobs" created by the O&M operation will "have a significant positive impact on Martha's Vineyard economy, which experiences severe seasonal fluctuations in employment due to its largely tourism-dependent economy" and will result in a "positive and stabilizing impact on one of the Commonwealth's most highly seasonal regional economies."

600 low-income ratepayers, RAP will provide electric bill savings of roughly \$400 per year by buying down electric supply rates. Vineyard Power will also pursue potential for low-income ratepayer participation in local solar energy projects for further potential savings of up to \$600 per year for a total of nearly \$1,000 per year.



Vineyard Power's Richard Andre discussing employment opportunities at an event on Martha's Vineyard

To make the island community more resilient in the face of extreme weather it is exposed to, RAP will devote at least \$3.75 million to solar power and battery storage investments at critical facilities. The program will enable municipal, county, regional, tribal, and nonprofit entities to finance solar and battery storage projects, including microgrids, that enhance community resiliency for critical facilities and infrastructure by providing backup power, and also deliver energy cost savings. A slate of over 30 potential projects that meet the specified criteria have already been identified, with input from a community Advisory Committee. Selection and prioritization will be determined by factors such as municipality population size, geographic location, and Environmental Justice (EJ) population.

"The six towns of Martha's Vineyard are committed to 100% renewable energy and the 100% elimination of fossil fuels," said Vineyard Power President Richard Andre. "Our partnership with Vineyard Wind, through our first-in-the-nation Community Benefits Agreement, demonstrates that offshore wind development can not only deliver the clean, renewable energy but also provide jobs, investments, and bill savings to our community. Based on our collaborative partnership with Vineyard Wind, I would encourage any community with potential for offshore wind to explore a partnership with Vineyard Offshore."