

Building Respectful Relations with Tribal Nations

Case Study in Offshore Wind Development

Vineyard Offshore respects the sovereignty of Tribal Nations. The company is committed to leading the industry's most robust Tribal engagement process, with attention to economic, cultural, environmental, and capacity issues, among others, in the interest of environmental justice, equity, and partnership. It is a commitment we have been striving to live up to since starting work on the nation's first offshore wind farm, Vineyard Wind 1. As Vineyard Offshore, we are still striving toward – and still learning about – how best to work with Tribal leaders and members for mutual benefit, as we continue to evolve the Vineyard method of offshore wind development. These efforts recently resulted in the signing of a historic offshore wind Tribal Benefit Agreement.

Beginning in 2016, the Vineyard Wind team opened a line of communication with Tribal communities in the region. Beyond federal lease requirements to

discuss survey plans and engage Tribal members, Vineyard Wind made a concerted effort to ensure that each Tribe was well-informed and had opportunities to engage in project permitting and development activities, as well as data sharing.

This included inviting the six federally recognized Tribes associated with our lease area to tour a geological and geophysical (G&G) survey vessel to learn how surveys are conducted. These Tribes and the state-recognized Chappaquiddick Wampanoag Tribe were also invited to meet with archeological consultants to review the geological data collected and ancient landforms identified in the lease area and export cable corridors. Vineyard Wind also set up a dedicated web portal for Tribes to access studies, reports, and videos from research efforts.

Employment and Business Opportunities

Vineyard Wind invited all Massachusetts-based tribes to participate in its Windward Workforce program that would recruit, mentor, and train Massachusetts residents for careers in the offshore wind industry, with the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe and Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) expressing strong interest in the program.

Vineyard Wind engaged a local consultant to work with Tribal staff on a needs assessment to identify individuals and Tribe-affiliated businesses who are interested in working in the industry, define barriers to entry, and provide recommendations on training and educational pathways that could position Tribal members to work within the industry.

As part of our supplier diversity program, Vineyard Wind contracted with the Oceanic Network (formerly the Business Network for Offshore Wind) to educate Tribal members about offshore wind and potential supply chain opportunities. The Oceanic Network presented its Foundation 2 Blade program, which prepares businesses for opportunities in offshore wind, at the Mashpee Tribal Center in April 2023, with Tribal members attending. Apart from this event, the Oceanic Network took steps to ensure effective outreach to Tribal Nations and inclusion of Tribal businesses. For this program, outreach was extended to Tribal governments of the Shinnecock, Narragansett, Hassanamisco Band of Nipmuc, Matakesett, and Pocasset Wampanoag Tribes.



Oceanic Network has also hired Tribal business owners to provide catering and photography services.

Cultural knowledge of the waters off the Massachusetts coast and a strong focus on environmental protection made Tribal members likely candidates for Protected Species Observer (PSO) positions. PSOs are required aboard project vessels, where they watch for North Atlantic right whales and other species of concern and have authority to shut down underwater noise-generating activities like survey work and pile-driving operations when they detect marine mammal presence. Vineyard Wind funded PSO certification training and actively sought out tribal participation. Two members of the Mashpee Tribe completed the training and went on to work on the project. Vineyard Wind has also advocated with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to recognize traditional cultural knowledge in qualifying Tribal members to become PSOs.

Mitigation and Benefits

As part of mitigation commitments for Vineyard Wind 1, design measures were taken to reduce visual impacts of the project for the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), from whose land the project would be visible. The use of aviation detection lighting - navigation lights that turn on only when aircraft are in the vicinity - would reduce illumination of the turbines to an estimated 1% of hours per year.

The Massachusetts Tribes were also included in the Resiliency and Affordability Program (RAP) developed for the communities on the South Coast, Cape Cod, and the islands, and have designated seats on the program's advisory councils.

With funding of \$15 million over 15 years, RAP provides electric rate relief for income-eligible households and invests in distributed solar and battery storage projects to make critical facilities more resilient against extreme weather and climate change.

Currently, Vineyard Wind is working with RAP community partner Citizens Energy and the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe to access RAP funding for a solar project at tribally owned elder housing. The Tribe would be the first-ever recipient of RAP funding, outside of the ratepayer programs that are currently in place, and the project would eliminate the energy costs associated with the housing units.

Deepening Relationships

With Vineyard Wind 1 under construction and Vineyard Offshore transitioning to its next round of projects, engagement with Tribal Nations has continued to grow and deepen. Vineyard Offshore is one of the only offshore wind developers with a staffed Tribal Lead and is currently the only developer with a statement on respect for Tribal sovereignty and cultural heritage included among its core values displayed on its website homepage. Vineyard Offshore has also provided internal Tribal relations and cultural awareness training for staff.

Vineyard Offshore meets regularly with Mashpee and Aquinnah Tribal Councils. The company has sponsored and attended a clambake for the Mashpee general membership, with other clambakes planned for other Tribal Nations, and held a virtual community meeting with the Shinnecock Nation on Long Island, where Vineyard Offshore has been selected to build the 1.3 GW Excelsior Wind project for New York. Also, in partnership with the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, the company sponsored and assisted with the planning of a job fair and family day that brought in dozens of members and connected them with offshore wind employment and educational opportunities. The opportunity to meet and socialize with Tribal elders and other members has enriched the team's understanding of Tribal culture and heritage, as well as needs, concerns, and interests.

These deepening relationships have resulted in material benefits as well. At the request of the Mashpee, Vineyard Offshore has committed to funding a socio-economic study – effectively a benchmark census – of the Tribe, now underway. Vineyard Offshore has also become a technical assistance partner, helping to write grants for the Tribe. Vineyard Offshore's letter of support for the Mashpee Tribe's grant application to the federal

Solar for All program is the company's first for a Tribal initiative.

In August, Vineyard Offshore partnered with the Bristol Community College Foundation to create a special fund providing scholarships for Wampanoag Tribal members to earn a Certificate or Associate degree in Offshore Wind at the college. Vineyard Offshore will provide stipends to support living expenses for a limited number of Tribal members pursuing these credentials.

Vineyard Offshore is committed to providing wraparound support for Tribal members to participate in industry events and training programs. The company has provided reimbursement for travel, accommodation, and other necessities to ensure that individuals face fewer barriers to participating in and benefiting from the industry.

Vineyard Offshore discussions with the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe have recently borne fruit. In a unanimous vote, the Tribal Council of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe joined with Vineyard Offshore in a historic Tribal Benefit Agreement. The agreement establishes a Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Offshore Wind Community Fund, which will support education, environment and natural resources, cultural resources, and historic preservation efforts by the Tribe. Initiatives supported by the fund could include scholarships for Tribal members, wastewater projects, capacity funds for the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer to engage with the offshore wind industry permitting review process, language reclamation, workforce training programs and facilities.

"We are proud to have begun a new chapter in the relationship between tribal governments and offshore wind developers, and we are proud to call Vineyard Offshore and your team a partner in clean energy development, environmental stewardship, and mutual benefit," wrote **Brian M. Weeden, chairman of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe**, in a letter of support for Vineyard Offshore's latest project proposal.

Vineyard Offshore plans to pursue a similar approach and/or pursue other benefits arrangements with Tribal Nations elsewhere, including the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation and the Mohegan Tribe of Connecticut.

West Meets East

Now, with Vineyard Offshore granted a lease area off the Northern California coast, its Tribal engagement is ramping up further. Senior leadership and in-state staff have met multiple times with leaders of over a dozen Tribal Nations in California to start to develop relationships. In August, Vineyard Offshore brought several California Tribal members East to attend the Offshore WINDPOWER annual conference, where they had a chance to meet, formally and informally, with East Coast Tribal members. They had a chance to tour by boat the Vineyard Wind 1 site under

construction, to see the reality of offshore wind development for themselves.

Building on its experience in Vineyard Wind 1, Vineyard Offshore's approach to offshore wind development relies on forming collaborative relationships and enduring partnerships. The company looks forward to nurturing relationships based on respect with all the Tribal Nations touched by its projects.