

## Arctic battle should move to Hyannis Port



AL GRILLO / Associated Press

**Caribou** are more threatened by global warming than by oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

By Michael Shellenberger  
and Ted Norhaus

The fate of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has once again grabbed national headlines as supporters of oil development are using an unrelated defense budget bill to authorize oil drilling in the refuge. Yet away from the headlines, a far greater ecological tragedy is unfolding as part of the same budget bill and it is being led by a far more unlikely character, none other than Bobby Kennedy Jr., one of America's most prominent environmentalists. With the help of his uncle, Sen. Edward Kennedy, and the anti-environmental U.S. Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska, Kennedy is trying to push a budget amendment that would prevent construction of a major Cape Cod wind farm even though developing more wind-generated energy is vitally important to the battle against global warming.

The Cape Wind project would be the second largest wind farm project in the world. It would provide clean renewable energy for Cape Cod and the surrounding region — meeting roughly 70 percent of Cape Cod's electrical energy needs year-round. The project will prove the viability of wind as a good source of energy to American investors, politicians and the public, and will be crucial to establishing America's leadership in the fast-growing wind energy industry, where Europe threatens to surpass us.

The catch is this: The project sits off the coast of some of the priciest real estate in the world that is owned

by some of the most powerful families in the country — most prominently the Kennedy clan, whose ancestral estate is located in Hyannis Port. Kennedy's confusion about what is more important — protecting his view of the ocean or global warming — is emblematic of the moral and intellectual exhaustion of modern environmentalism.

This confusion about ecological priorities speaks to the conceptual limitations of a worldview born among the privileged patricians of a generation for whom building mansions by the sea was indistinguishable from advocating for the preservation of national parks or big game hunting in the wilds of Africa. It is from this tradition that environmentalism and the politics of preservation evolved.

Environmentalists believe that they are protecting a "thing" called the environment from human intrusion and destruction. Issues such as drilling in the Arctic refuge fit well with these ideas of nature and human intrusion and thus become totemic battles for the environmental movement. The controversy over the Cape Wind project is much harder to fit into the categories either of intrusion or nature and hence leaves many environmentalists paralyzed.

Nantucket Sound is not a pristine wilderness. It is among the busiest shipping channels on the East Coast and is surrounded by heavily populated communities. Cape Wind, at worst, constitutes a relatively minor intrusion upon this already developed landscape. Yet Cape Wind is a project that is vitally important to ad-

dress arguably the greatest of all human intrusions upon nature, global warming. The crisis results when environmentalists such as Kennedy fail to distinguish between their personal use of the landscape and the ecological issues at stake. For Kennedy, Cape Wind is indistinguishable from an oil rig in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

National environmental organizations, for their part, are preparing a massive mobilization to forestall the latest effort to drill in the refuge while remaining mostly silent (although formally opposed) to the amendment that the Kennedys and Young have authored to kill Cape Wind. This is curious when one considers that global warming is a far greater threat to the Arctic refuge than is oil drilling.

Fortunately, it is not too late for the national environmental community to condemn Kennedy's anti-wind crusade and make the development of the Cape Wind farm one of its highest political priorities. Kennedy, for his part, should resign immediately as senior attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council.

As the tundra melts and the oceans rise, it is incumbent upon the national environmental movement to stand up to the Kennedy family's not-in-my-backyard opposition to the world's clean energy future.

Ted Norhaus and Michael Shellenberger are authors of "The Death of Environmentalism and the Birth of a New American Politics," which will be published by Houghton Mifflin in early 2007.