

Environmental governance describes interventions that change environmentally related values, incentives, behaviors, and decision-making institutions. In New England, the community has historically played an important role in local environmental governance, one that is institutionalized in the annual town meeting. Yet little research has been done on institutions and processes of local decision-making vis-à-vis emerging issues of environmental governance. This research focuses on community wind development in Massachusetts, and uses the case of Falmouth to explore how traditional governance structures meet the challenge of contemporary environmental issues. Data on community decision-making was collected through document analysis and interviews with town officials, residents, NGO members, and environmental consultants. Results indicate that decision-making power lies at multiple nodes within a large network. The network includes traditional town government bodies and town meeting, but the regional planning commission, quasi-state agencies, external consultants, citizen groups, and social media all shape the decision-making process. The research suggests that in the New England context, the strength of the connections between each node affect the transparency and inclusivity of the process and the ultimate success of a wind development project.