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Wind Power Folly - Part 2

The Maine wind power plan will produce a combined clearcut area in the Maine woods over 340 miles long and 155 miles wide. And then there's the impacts of blasting, and the access roads.

Wind power development, as approved by our state government, will ruin the Maine woods. Goodbye trees, goodbye wildlife, goodbye forested landscape. Hello to 1700 forty-story wind turbines. Hello fan-blade shadow flicker. Hello to 1700 red strobe lights towering above us. Farewell to the night sky. And hello to a constant low resonance hum, or worse. Wind turbine noise is shaped by the topography of each location. It is described by some as “similar to a pair of sneakers banging around in a clothes dryer.”

Each site will require the clear cutting of an area the size of three or four football fields. Additional clear cutting will be done for power lines, and access roads. 1700 turbine sites = 5100 clearcut areas measuring 360 ft X 160 ft., a total area clearcut in the Maine woods over 340 miles long and 155 miles wide.

Blasting for wind turbine foundations will change spring water flow patterns. Access road construction will intercept other high elevation springs, negatively impacting any downstream body of water the springs support. The permanent effect blasting and clear cutting will have on the underground aquifers is especially threatening to wild brook trout, the most valuable fishery resource in Maine.

The access roads will require storm drains. Spring water will be diverted. Without trees to slow the descent of rain, it does not seep naturally into the ground. It accelerates downhill through the clearcut, taking topsoil and everything else with it, depositing the sediment into whatever body of water it enters. In hot weather, this runoff raises stream temperatures, which is a death knell for native brook trout. So who's protecting the Maine brook trout fisheries from unfettered wind power development? Evidently, no one.

Kevin Gurall is a founding member of the Partnership for the Preservation of the Downeast Lakes Watershed (PPDLW). It is an organization formed to stop the Bower Mountain wind power project proposed for Carroll Plantation. (website: www.ppdlw.org -- info@ppdlw.org).

Mr. Gurall sent an inquiry to Maine DIFW regarding their involvement in the review of wind power projects. The following excerpts are from the reply he received from Steve Timpano, the Environmental Coordinator of Maine DIFW:

“We have developed an extensive review protocol of pre-development study requirements (to be done by the project developer) ... Overall, to date we have not identified any "project stopper" issues for wildlife or fisheries, though we have recommended (and developers have complied) with re-design or relocation of parts of projects to avoid sensitive wildlife habitats.” Mr. Timpano also states: “Post-

construction monitoring studies, to determine actual effects of projects after they are built and in operation, are also typically required through the State permitting process.”

If Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife doesn't consider an area 340 miles long and 155 miles wide, in the highest, most remote locations of Maine, as sensitive wildlife habitat, then what is? And the project review for the permitting process is done by the developer, the one with everything to gain from a favorable decision! One can only wonder why this obvious conflict of interest is being ignored.

In his own description of “post-construction” monitoring, Mr. Timpano acknowledges that Maine DIFW will “**determine actual effects of projects after they are built and in operation...**” So who takes responsibility when the feces hits the fan blade? If the partridge population tumbles, or the northern Maine deer population declines even more, or brook trout go belly up, the developer will say “*the plan was approved.*” Then what? Has it ever struck you as odd how this development marches forward when so many Maine residents are opposed to it?

Everett McCleod Sr., who represents Maine's District 11, has land leasing agreements with First Wind. Among the towns he represents are: Burlington, Lee, Winn and Mattawamkeag. Rep McLeod is leasing some of his land to First Wind for their Rollins Project. The Rollins Project includes Burlington, Lee, Winn and Mattawamkeag. Rep. McLeod represents the unorganized territories that are home to First Wind's Stetson Mountain and Jimmey/Owl Mountain Projects. He also represents Carroll Plantation where First Wind is planning to put turbines on Bowers Mountain.

Rod Carr, who represents District 11, recused himself from a vote at a Lincoln Town Council meeting last April that awarded First Wind a 20-year tax break. The Friends of Lincoln Lakes group accused him of a conflict of interest. Mr. Carr acknowledged that he was working as a paid lobbyist for landowners who would benefit from the project.

The Executive V.P. and Chief Development Officer of First Wind is Kurt Adams. The same Kurt Adams who used to be Chairman of the Maine Public Utilities Commission, the State's primary utilities regulator. Prior to that, he was Governor John Baldacci's chief legal counsel.

Governor Baldacci appointed former Governor Angus King to the Wind Power Task Force. He's also one of the two partners in Independence Wind LLC. First Wind's Vice President for Mergers and Acquisitions is Angus King. No, not the former Governor. His son! A Vice President at First Wind has a father on the Governor's Wind Power Task Force!

Wind power development does have its benefits. And yes, they certainly are green.

Jack Gagnon is an avid fly fisherman and upland bird hunter. He has written for a number of national sporting publications.