



Draft Voluntary Land-Based Wind Energy Guidelines

Introduction

The development of renewable energy is important for the future of the nation and the health of the environment. The Department of Interior is committed to facilitating the development of wind energy and other renewable resources while protecting our nation's treasured landscapes and wildlife.

Advances in wind energy technologies and increased interest in renewable energy sources have resulted in rapid expansion of the wind energy industry in the United States.

However, if wind energy facilities are designed and constructed in the wrong locations, they can have significant negative impacts to fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Conservation Planning Assistance Program typically becomes involved in the review of potential wind energy developments on public lands through the National Environmental Policy Act. This may be as a cooperating agency or because of the Service's responsibilities under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act, or because of the Agency's special technical expertise.

What are the draft voluntary, land-based Wind Energy Guidelines?

These draft voluntary land-based Guidelines are designed to provide developers with the information they need to make the best possible decisions

in selecting sites for wind energy facilities to avoid and minimize the negative effects to fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats.

How did the Service create these Guidelines?

The Secretary of the Interior established the Wind Turbine Guidelines Advisory Committee under the auspices of the Federal Advisory Committee Act in March 2007 to provide recommendations for the guidelines. The Committee was comprised of a diversity of stakeholders, including federal, tribal, state, private industries and conservation organizations. After two years of deliberations, the Committee submitted their final recommendations to the Secretary on March 4, 2010. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service then convened an internal working group representing several Service programs to review the Committee recommendations. The working group used the recommendations as a basis to develop the Service's draft voluntary Wind Energy Guidelines.

Who are these Guidelines intended for?

The Guidelines are designed to be used for all utility-scale and community-scale land-based, wind energy projects regardless of whether they are proposed for private or public lands. The Guidelines will be used by developers, federal agencies, and state organizations for selecting sites for wind energy projects. These Guidelines are not designed for off-shore wind energy projects as those projects entail another suite of effects and analyses.

How do the Guidelines work?

These Guidelines are voluntary. The Guidelines describe the information needed to identify sites with low risk to wildlife, and assess, mitigate, and monitor the potential adverse effects of wind energy projects on fish, wildlife, and their habitats, using a consistent and predictable approach, while providing flexibility to accommodate the unique circumstances of each project.

Using a "tiered approach" for assessing potential effects to fish, wildlife, and their habitats, these Guidelines present an iterative decision-making process for collecting information in increasing detail, quantifying the possible risks of proposed wind energy projects to fish, wildlife, and their habitats, and evaluating those risks to select sites and make construction and operation decisions.

When do the Guidelines take effect?

The Service will continue to use the 2003 Guidelines until these proposed Guidelines go through public comment before getting finalized.

Closing

The Service's goal is to use the best available science to select sites for wind energy facilities in the right places, avoiding sensitive habitats for birds, bats and other wildlife. Doing so will benefit declining species such as the sage-grouse and golden eagle, while providing vital energy for America.



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