



Public Comment on Wind Siting Regulations Roger Smith, Clean Water Action

FOR ELECTRONIC FILING

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Clean Water Action is a national environmental non-profit with 24,000 Connecticut members. We have worked on power plant and energy related issues in Connecticut since 1998, from working with citizen volunteers to clean up the Sooty Six power plants to supporting strong renewable energy and energy efficiency provisions in the 2003, 2007 and 2011 omnibus energy laws. We also have promoted clean energy and energy efficiency at the town and residential level through the Clean Energy Communities initiative.

We strongly support the state's draft wind regulations which balance the need to protect local communities from inappropriate facilities with the environmental, cost, security and reliability benefits of distributed renewable energy.

Clean Water Action recognizes the difficulty municipalities face in regulating the development of local wind energy projects. They frequently lack access to technical experts to independently evaluate claims by developers, or benefit from best practices and experience gained elsewhere in the country. For these reasons we support uniform standards for wind siting in the state of Connecticut.

Not all wind projects should be built. We were dismayed by the failure of a wind developer to properly conduct community outreach in advance of proposing wind turbines for predominantly residential communities, which sparked an unnecessary backlash. It is critical to protect local communities from poorly considered wind turbines which would burden a community with unnecessary shadow flicker, hazards from winter ice throw, endanger wildlife, or destroy natural areas during construction.

We support that these proposed regulations will give the Siting Council and local residents much greater ability to scrutinize proposed wind projects by putting the burden on the developers to study and show any visual and acoustic impacts, shadow

flicker, and potential ice or blade throw. We also support the enforced minimum setback requirements. This should enable the Council to properly protect residents from poorly conceived systems and ensure that local quality of life is balanced with the need for expanded clean energy development.

As an individual I have been fortunate to visit utility-scale wind installations in Rhode Island, Massachusetts and in Vinalhaven, Maine. Vinalhaven has three 1.5MW wind turbines, which were installed by the local electric cooperative following a 383-5 vote by island residents. The three turbines have become a iconic symbol for the island with many residents wearing Fox Island wind gear and placing wind bumper stickers on their vehicles. The island residents I met with were very positive about the experience of leaving near wind turbines. To assess the noise I visited within several hundred feet of the turbines at day and late at night. The level of noise was like that of a neighbor with an air conditioner on, or the passing of cars. Even on a sleepy island it was barely noticeable.

Whether the sight and sound of a wind turbine is an annoyance or pleasure may have more to do with the circumstances under which the turbine was installed than its inherent characteristics. I would urge renewable energy developers to work with local communities on siting before the project is finalized, and to consider sharing some of the economic benefits from the turbine with those who will live near it for years to come (why not a monthly “wind dividend” for the nearest neighbors?)

Our organization looks forward to supporting many more small and utility-scale wind turbines in Connecticut as a critical step towards the permanent retirement of the old, polluting fossil fuel-fired power plants which continue to significantly harm Connecticut’s air quality and shorten the lives of thousands of Connecticut residents each year. On behalf of our Connecticut members Clean Water Action urges the Council to approve these regulations as drafted.

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