

Redington Wind Farm

Developer: Maine Mountain Power

Location: Franklin County, Maine

Prepared July, 2008

For updates, see www.macalester.edu/windvisual

BACKGROUND

The Redington Wind project was proposed by Maine Mountain Power, a subsidiary of Edison International and Endless Energy Company. It was originally proposed as a thirty turbine project on both Redington and Black Nubble Mountains, but was scaled back to eighteen turbines on only Black Nubble Mountain. The turbines were to be large three megawatt generators. The project is referred to as both the Redington Wind Farm and the Black Nubble Wind Farm. Franklin County is home to 29,467 people with about 17 people per square mile. According to the 2000 census, the county has a median household income of \$35,891.

While the area is sparsely populated, it is enjoyed as a recreational area for many people from Maine and from neighboring states. As originally proposed, the project would have been within a mile of the Appalachian Trail. Hikers could have been within four miles of the wind farm for seventeen miles of their trek. The second proposal made the closest turbines over three miles away. The proposed project was also close to the Sugarloaf ski area and its associated development.

The development was to be on mountaintop land owned by Redington Mountain Windpower, LLC, which is an alias for the developer, Endless Energy. This means there were no private landowners with whom the developer had to negotiate leases, as in many other projects.

Maine has an aggressive Renewable Portfolio Standard, calling for 40% renewable energy by 2017. The Renewable Portfolio Standards of Connecticut and Massachusetts also create an incentive for wind development in Maine. Still, the state ranks 24th in installed capacity, with only 42.1 MW of installed wind projects. There are 54 MW under construction. Even in the scaled-back proposal, the 54 MW project on Black Nubble Mountain would be the largest on-shore wind project



in New England.

POLICY CONTEXT

The Redington Wind Farm did not require an Environmental Impact Statement through the National Environmental Protection Act or a state equivalent. Instead, the developer had to apply to the Maine Land Use Regulation Committee (LURC) to rezone 1000 acres to a Planned Development subdistrict. It also had to apply for permits from the State Department of Environmental Protection and Army Corps of Engineers.

Anticipating "that the proposal will generate a significant amount of interest," LURC created a website for the regulatory consideration of Black Nubble. The website links to pertinent law and procedural rules and contains a catalogue of meetings, hearings and documents pertaining to the application process, going back to 2002. The website is a remarkable resource for citizens interested in the process, in the legal context or in being involved.

The developer submitted a Draft Petition for Rezoning in December, 2005. A series of hearings, public comments, conferences and a site visit led to denial of the application by LURC in June 2007. Maine Mountain Power, LLC quickly reapplied for a scaled down version of the proposal, including only eighteen turbines on one mountain. That application was also denied in January 2008.

PUBLIC RESPONSE

The Redington Wind Farm proposal attracted controversy from the very beginning. Many of the groups taking positions for or against the project were existing organizations committed to protecting the area. The Maine Appalachian Trail Club (MATC) and the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) sent representatives to the 2002 Pre-application Conference. Both groups became official intervenors, opposing the initial project, along with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and Friends of the

OTHER WIND PROJECTS IN MAINE:

Project	Location	Developer	Turbines	Status
Mars Hill Wind	Mars Hill	First Wind	28	Operating
Stetson Ridge	Washington County	First Wind	38	Construction
Kibby Mountain Wind	Kibby Mountain	TransCanada	44	Approved
Record Hill Wind	Roxbury & Byron	Independence Wind	~25	Site Testing
Freedom Wind	Freedom	Competitive Energy Services	3	Failed



“Simulated view of Redington Wind Farm from Sugarloaf Ski Mountain” (Prepared for developer by Terrence J. DeWan & Associates).

Western Mountains (FWM). NRCM proposed the alternative plan of fewer turbines on only Black Nubble Mountain, and endorsed the developer’s revised proposal.

In comments to the LURC, the Maine Appalachian Land Trust opposed the project, calling for state guidelines for wind siting. Maine Audubon feared harm to birds. Friends of the Boundary Mountains wanted to preserve the area for “their traditional uses of recreation and forestry.”

Groups associated with the Appalachian trail were among the foremost opponents of the wind development. The Appalachian Mountain Club directors issued a statement in opposition, fearing the project “would violate the natural beauty of the area, detract from the enjoyment of the natural Maine environment and do serious economic and aesthetic damage to the trail, the surrounding communities and the enjoyment of many thousands of Maine residents and visitors.”

The governors of the ATC were unanimous in their opposition to the wind farm, fearing it posed a threat to the area’s “scenic beauty, remote character, rugged terrain, high mountain vistas and its undeveloped landscape.”

Along with aesthetic concerns, the Appalachian Trail organizations warned that the project would endanger plants and animals, especially seventeen rare species, including the Bicknell Thrush. Concerns about impacts on wildlife seemed focused on construction, and the slow rate of revegetation in alpine and sub-alpine ecosystems.

Although the leaders of the Appalachian Trail organizations formed a united front against the development, many of their constituents were less circumspect. The various Appalachian Trail publications were filled with lively debate including many letters written by hikers in support of the wind development. Endless Energy commissioned a survey from Market Decisions in 1994 to assess the attitudes of various groups. One-hundred and sixty hikers were surveyed on the trail, near potential viewpoints, and shown visualizations of the proposed wind farm. The consultants found that 57% thought the development would be appropriate, 20% were neutral and 23% thought it would be inappropriate.

A similar survey was performed in 2003 and 2004 using

better quality simulations. That survey showed 60% of 201 hikers thought the turbines would have a positive or neutral impact on their hiking experience, while 38% thought they would have a negative effect.

The developer worked hard to show public support for the project, not only with this survey—which was presented in the application—but with a petition and by encouraging supporters to write letters and attend hearings. Their website contains a long list of individual supporters.

Many organizations supported the project as well. This included health organizations such as the American Lung Association of Maine, Maine Public Health Association and the Physicians for Social Responsibility/Maine. Project supporters also included environmental groups, such as the Conservation Law Foundation, Environment Maine and Maine Global Climate Change, Inc. Lastly, economic development organizations such as the Maine Center for Economic Policy, the Franklin County Development Corporation and the Maine State Chamber of Commerce all lined up behind the project. The Natural Resources Council of Maine, which opposed the original proposal, strongly backed the wind development when proposed as a smaller project restricted to Black Nubble mountain.

Despite what appears to be strong support, the LURC decided in January 2008 to deny the application a second time. The ATC declared “Maine Summits Protected.”

SUMMARY

While this project remains stalled, Maine Mountain Power and the LURC seem to have succeeded where other lead agencies have failed disastrously. The siting process was transparent, the applicant was flexible to community concerns and a compromise was made to mitigate the greatest impacts of the project. And yet, the project failed, about fifteen years after the developer first proposed it. This may have been because the Appalachian Trail organizations represented an organized, experienced and professional opposition to the project.

For more information on this case, and on others, go to

www.maclester.edu/windvisual

Bibliography

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