



Industrial Wind Action Group

facts, analysis, exposure of wind energy's real impacts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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INDUSTRIAL WIND ACTION GROUP WELCOMES RELEASE OF NAS REPORT ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF WIND ENERGY PROJECTS

Organization calls for more thorough cost-benefit analysis prior to the permitting and construction of commercial-scale wind projects

NEW HAMPSHIRE (May 18, 2007). Industrial Wind Action (IWA) Group welcomed the release of the National Academies' National Research Council (NRC) report¹ on the environmental impacts of wind energy projects. Although this report focused upon the Mid-Atlantic Highlands², it provides detailed information and recommendations relevant to the entire country. The NRC found that "Because wind energy is new to many state and local governments, the quality of processes for permitting wind-energy developments is uneven." The report also stated that there's "little anticipatory planning for wind-energy projects, and even if it occurred, it is not clear whether mechanisms exist that could incorporate such planning in regulatory decisions."

Lisa Linowes, Executive Director of Industrial Wind Action (IWA) Group agreed, stating that "most rural communities and state-level permitting boards have little experience dealing with the breadth of issues involved in erecting 400-foot structures along miles of new roads built in areas typically undisturbed by human activity." She added that the impacts on the local environment, the cumulative impacts on wildlife, and the health, welfare, and safety risks to nearby residents all need to be assessed and measured against a proposed project's promised benefits. "Unfortunately, what we're finding is a rush to approve applications on the grounds that any wind generated power - no matter how nominal - is believed to reduce atmospheric emissions and, thus, offset adverse impacts."

But the NRC report found that the environmental benefits of wind power were not certain, particularly in the Mid-Atlantic area. The report states that due to regulatory limits already in place, wind energy development will provide no reduction in emissions of sulfur and nitrogen oxides, the pollutants responsible for acid rain and ground-level ozone. Regarding carbon dioxide, industrial wind turbines will offset national emissions by only 1.2-4.5% from the levels that otherwise would occur from electricity generation.³ Consequently, wind power will not reduce carbon emissions of the U.S., but merely will slow the increase by a small amount.

¹ http://www.vawind.org/Assets/NRC/NRC_Wind.htm

² The mid-Atlantic Highlands include elevated regions of Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.

³ Electricity generation is responsible for only 39% of total U.S. carbon dioxide emissions from energy use.

The NRC report also makes clear there is insufficient information to assess the potential for population impacts on birds in the eastern U.S. And, while wildlife mortality research at wind energy facilities is limited and not standardized, the report concludes the potential for impacts on bat populations in the eastern U.S. appears significant. Linowes echoed the NRC's call for more, credible research, but added the wind industry is dismissive of the need for pre-construction wildlife studies claiming such studies have proven poor indicators of post-construction impacts. "This argument is more self-serving than fact-based," she said, and added that the lack of well-designed studies hindered the ability of land-use decision makers to determine whether a project is well sited. "It's much more difficult, legally and practicably, to mitigate for adverse effects after the turbines are operational," she said.

Based on the NRC's projection that 72,000 megawatts (MW) of wind capacity will be built in the U.S by 2020, owners of wind projects could reap \$40-billion⁴ in federal tax credits alone (excluding adjustments for inflation). "Add to this federal accelerated depreciation, and state and local tax subsidies, and we begin to understand the enormous cost of wind generation in terms of public dollars," Linowes said, adding that the environmental and public costs will not reduce our reliance on traditional generation nor will it provide meaningful reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. IWA firmly asserts the public deserves to see quantifiable benefits to wind development before any project is granted a green light.

Industrial Wind Action Group seeks to promote knowledge and raise awareness of the risks and damaging environmental impacts of industrial wind energy development. Information and analysis on the subject is available through its website, www.windaction.org. To subscribe to the IWA weekly newsletter, visit <http://www.windaction.org/subscribe>.

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⁴ Assumes an average 30% capacity factor and production tax credit of \$0.020 per kWh.