

CONSERVANCY QUESTIONS WINDPOWER PROJECT

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has written a letter to the West Virginia Public Service Commission questioning the proposed Ned Power windpower project. In its letter, the Conservancy requested both procedural changes in the way the Public Service Commission evaluates proposed wind power projects and items which the Commission should consider before approving any such project. The letter also endorsed the general idea of wind as an energy source for producing electricity.

In its letter, the Conservancy suggested that the Public Service Commission develop siting criteria for wind power facilities, including such things as visual and noise effects upon certain public lands and upon "recognized special places." It also suggested that the Commission consider the impact of wind power facilities upon endangered species and upon local and migratory bird populations as well as water pollution resulting from roads and other construction activity.

The Conservancy also requested that the Public Service Commission perform its own scientific studies of the ecological effects of a proposed project, including the impacts upon birds. It has been Commission practice to rely upon studies performed by the applicant.

In its correspondence the Conservancy also endorsed in general the idea of wind as a power source without specifically endorsing the projects now pending before the Commission.

The letter appears in its entirety on Page 5.

The letter is the result of extensive discussions by both the Conservancy's Board and members of the Wind Power Committee. As Peter Schoenfeld reports (p. 4) in a style that would make Sgt Joe Friday proud and Hugh Rogers reports (p. 3) in a more reflective style, the Board was neither willing to fully endorse nor to wholeheartedly oppose the proposed Ned Power Project. While Board members expressed universal support for wind power as an energy source, the Board was not willing to ignore potential environmental impacts of West Virginia projects simply because power from wind has always been considered as "green power." Subsequent consultation with attorneys and consideration of the Board's discussions and the concerns raised there resulted in the letter to the Public Service Commission.