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**Subject: EBR 012-1279, White Pines Wind Project**

The White Pines wind project will transform both the human and natural environment of South Marysburgh in Prince Edward County. The auditory and visual disturbance will have clear effects on the health of residents and the heritage landscape in which they live. Less clear are the effects on the natural environment: the proponent, wpd White Pines Wind Inc., has not conducted adequate research to establish, as claimed, the negligible impact of installing 29 wind turbines near lake Ontario, many in an Important Bird Area vital to migratory birds.

The Natural Heritage Assessment (NHA) is deeply flawed. It either does not provides necessary information or draws conclusions based on limited research:

- 1. Bird Mortality.** The NHA does not estimate the total potential bird mortality due to collision, claiming it is not possible to use fatality rates at nearby wind projects. Instead, it cites the industry average of 2-4 birds per turbine even though nearby Wolfe Island, with 14 birds per turbine, renders the average valueless. Since the Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory (PEPtBO) lies approximately 5 km from wpd's nearest turbines, PEPtBO's records could also have been used to estimate mortality. The refusal to make any attempt at estimation discredits the opinion that mortality will be insignificant.
- 2. Habitat avoidance.** Twelve of wpd's turbines are located in the South Shore Important Bird Area, and eight more turbines are adjacent to it. The turbines would hinder migratory bird movement along both the north and south shore approaches to Prince Edward Point, where Lake Ontario's highest number of migratory birds has been recorded. Yet the NHA gives no estimate of the potential negative effects on migratory (or breeding) birds from habitat avoidance.
- 3. Habitat destruction.** The Environmental Impact Study (EIS) in the NHA states that natural vegetation will be removed from 55.5 ha of Vegetation Community Types (Appendix B, Table 6.2). However, Table 6.3 lists vegetation removal by Natural Feature Types: 26.6 ha of Significant Wildlife Habitat, Alvar; 47.3 ha of Significant Wildlife Habitat, Migratory Land Birds; and 19.8 ha of Significant Wildlife Habitat, Shrub/Successional Breeding Bird Habitat. The issue is not the discrepancy in the figures because of overlapping classifications, but the oversimplification of the impact by the NHA, which routinely cites misleading statistics of less than 2 percent for an area or type. It is simply not possible to have confidence in the EIS conclusions and proposed mitigations when the impacts of 29 turbines and 17 km of access roads are clearly complex and widespread. The EIS also does not quantify the losses in terms of the number of breeding and

migratory birds and other wildlife. Estimates, however speculative, would at least provide an indication of the overall impact.

- 4. Endangered Species Permits.** Neither the body nor the appendices of the NHA contain any information on the status of the endangered species, and the applications for MNR permits are not currently posted on wpd's website. Members of the public cannot therefore comment on the adequacy of the field research that led to permitting. Since the independence of the MNR permitting process from the MOE's Renewable Energy Approval (REA) process is presently before the courts, wpd's omission is inexcusable.
- 5. Miller Family Nature Reserve.** In spring 2012, six months before wpd submitted the NHA, the Miller Family Nature Reserve was established on 446 acres of land and 3,000 feet of shoreline. Seven wpd turbines border this natural property on three sides. Yet the NHA makes no attempt to calculate the impact on land owned by the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Hastings Prince Edward Land Trust. Indeed, the NHA doesn't even make reference to the Reserve. This is a gross oversight in what is supposed to be a thorough discussion of environmental impacts.
- 6. Cumulative Effects.** Two wpd turbines lie to the east and five to the west of Gilead Power's Ostrander Point wind project. Although Ostrander Point had not received an REA at the time wpd filed the NHA, its approval status was confirmed before the MOE deemed wpd's application "complete." Yet the NHA contains no study of the cumulative environmental impacts of the two adjacent projects. The convenient loophole in the timing of the approval process should not excuse wpd from conducting a thorough study of the flyway barrier for migratory birds and their displacement from staging areas.
- 7. Verification.** The MNR has conducted only a paper review of the NHA (see K. Bellamy letter, June 8, 2012, in NHA/EIS, Appendix C). Unless MOE biologists have visited the project site, it seems that the so-called "ground-truthing" has been left exclusively to Stantec consultants. Since wpd has never provided any public site tours and the public has no right of access to the private land on which the project is located, it is not possible to verify the accuracy of the NHA. This is not a matter of trust but of legal responsibility. Without access to the project site, the public is denied the opportunity to meet the legal burden of proof required by the Environmental Review Tribunal because independent environmental studies cannot be undertaken.

Given all the above flaws, both the NHA and EIS are not "complete" reports and do not fulfill the requirements for an REA or even EBR posting. The MOE should at least compel wpd to conduct more research, provide full disclosure of information, and give site access to interested members of the public. But the best decision would recognize the opposition of the majority of South Marysburgh residents and would protect their health as well as the heritage landscape and natural environment. The MOE should disallow a poorly researched and fundamentally destructive wind project.