



Audubon's Position on Wind Power

Summary: Audubon strongly supports properly-sited wind power as a clean alternative energy source that reduces the threat of global warming. Wind power facilities should be planned, sited and operated to minimize negative impacts on bird and wildlife populations.

Rationale: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has clearly stated that the impacts of climate change are here now and will get worse.¹ Scientists have found that climate change has already affected half of the world's wild species' breeding, distribution, abundance and survival rates.² By mid-century, the IPCC predicts that climate change may contribute to the extinction of 20-30 percent of all species on earth.

In order to prevent species extinctions and other catastrophic impacts of climate change, scientists say we must reduce global warming emissions by at least 80 percent by 2050. Reducing pollution from fossil fuels to this degree will require rapidly expanding energy and fuel efficiency, renewable energy and alternative fuels, and changes in land use, agriculture, and transportation. To avoid catastrophe, we need to do all of these.

Wind power is an important part of the strategy to combat global warming. Wind power is currently the most economically competitive form of renewable energy. It provides nearly 15,000 megawatts of power in the United States, enough power for more than 3 million households, and could provide up to 20 percent of the country's electricity needs. Every megawatt-hour produced by wind energy avoids an average of 1,220 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions. If the United States obtains 20 percent of its electricity from wind power by 2020, it will reduce global warming emissions equivalent to taking 71 million cars off the road or planting 104 million acres of trees. Expanding wind power instead of fossil fuels also avoids the wildlife and human health impacts of oil and gas drilling, coal mining and fossil fuel burning.

Protecting Birds and Wildlife: While Audubon strongly supports wind power *and recognizes it will not be without some impact*, production and transmission facilities must be planned, sited and operated in concert with other actions needed to minimize and mitigate their impacts on birds and other wildlife *populations*. Several federal and state

¹ *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, published on April 6, 2007 by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change at <http://www.ipcc.ch>. People from over 130 countries contributed to the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report over the previous 6 years. These people included more than 2500 scientific expert reviewers, more than 800 contributing authors, and more than 450 lead authors

² Camille Parmesan and Gary Yohe, University of Texas at Austin, as cited in *Audubon* November-December 2007.

laws require this and the long-term sustainability of the wind industry depends on it. Wind power facilities impact birds from direct collisions with turbines and related facilities, such as power lines. Wind power facilities can also degrade or destroy habitat, cause disturbance and displacement, and disrupt important ecological links. These impacts can be avoided or significantly reduced, however, with proper siting, operation and mitigation.

Audubon supports the adoption of federal and state guidelines on the study, siting, operation and mitigation of wind power. Guidelines should provide developers, permitting agencies and conservation groups with the legal, technical and practical steps needed to minimize impacts on birds and other wildlife. Guidelines should provide the following essential elements:

- Minimum pre-permitting study requirements and guidance on study methods, frequency and acceptable data sources to ensure that wind power is sited in appropriate locations
- Clearly delineated siting criteria that designate areas where wind power should not be allowed, such as Important Bird Areas, major migratory corridors, wilderness areas, national parks, wildlife refuges, and other sensitive habitat such as wetlands and riparian corridors
- Clearly defined monitoring and mitigation requirements in permits, with periodic reviews and requirements for adaptive management if impacts significantly exceed levels allowed by permit
- Guidance on cumulative population impacts assessment and mitigation.

Audubon also encourages wind developers and permitting agencies to consult with wildlife experts, including Audubon staff and local chapters, to help inform study and siting decisions.

To view existing state guidelines, see:

http://www.fishwildlife.org/agency_science_Siting_wind.html.

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