



ENERGY & WILDLIFE POLICY COMMITTEE

Chair: Brad Loveless, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism

Vice-Chair: Vacant

Thursday March 12, 2020

1:00 pm to 5:00 pm

North American Wildlife & Natural Resources Conference

Room: St. Nicholas A

Hilton | Omaha, NE

Committee Charge: The Energy and Wildlife Policy Committee is focused on energy development and generation in North America and its impacts on fish and wildlife resources and their landscape habitats at the state, province, territory, region and international levels.

Agenda

- 1:00PM Call to Order and Introductions
Brad Loveless, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism
- 1:10 Approval of Minutes from the September 2019 Meeting
Brad Loveless, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism
- 1:15 State Roundtable
One representative per state agency highlights a legislative, policy or management challenge in their state
- 1:45 Report from Wind-Wildlife Working Group
Chris Berens, KWPT
- 2:15 USGS Energy Research
Mona Khalil, US Geological Survey
- 2:40 Update from American Wind Wildlife Institute
Abby Arnold, AWWI
- 3:00 -Break-**

- 3:15 Efficacy of [Land-based Wind Energy Guidelines](#) (WEGs)-Four perspectives*
- *Greg Link-North Dakota Game and Fish Department (10 min)*
 - *Gary Frazer-USFWS (10 min)*
 - *Nathan Cummins-The Nature Conservancy (10 min)*
 - *Michael Speerschneider-American Wind Energy Association (10 min)*
- Discussion: What does the future hold for the WEGs? (20 min)*
- * The executive summary of the WEGs is appended to the end of the agenda.*
- 4:15 Update from American Bird Conservancy
Joel Merriman, ABC
- 4:30 Wind Industry Engagement on Siting
Michael Speerschneider, American Wind Energy Association
- 4:45 Bats and Wind Energy
Joy Page, Defenders of Wildlife
- 5:00PM Adjourn

Executive Summary

As the Nation shifts to renewable energy production to supplant the need for carbon-based fuel, wind energy will be an important source of power. As wind energy production increases, both developers and wildlife agencies have recognized the need for a system to evaluate and address the potential negative impacts of wind energy projects on species of concern. These voluntary Guidelines provide a structured, scientific process for addressing wildlife conservation concerns at all stages of land-based wind energy development. They also promote effective communication among wind energy developers and federal, state, and local conservation agencies and tribes. When used in concert with appropriate regulatory tools, the Guidelines form the best practical approach for conserving species of concern. The Guidelines have been developed by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) working with the Wind Turbine Guidelines Advisory Committee. They replace interim voluntary guidance published by the Service in 2003.

The Guidelines discuss various risks to "species of concern" from wind energy projects, including collisions with wind turbines and associated infrastructure; loss and degradation of habitat from turbines and infrastructure; fragmentation of large habitat blocks into smaller segments that may not support sensitive species; displacement and behavioral changes; and indirect effects such as increased predator populations or introduction of invasive plants. The Guidelines assist developers in identifying species of concern that may potentially be affected by their proposed project, including migratory birds; bats; bald and

golden eagles and other birds of prey; prairie and sage grouse; and listed, proposed, or candidate endangered and threatened species. Wind energy development in some areas may be precluded by federal law; other areas may be inappropriate for development because they have been recognized as having high wildlife value based on their ecological rarity and intactness.

The Guidelines use a "tiered approach" for assessing potential adverse effects to species of concern and their habitats. The tiered approach is an iterative decision-making process for collecting information in increasing detail; quantifying the possible risks of proposed wind energy projects to species of concern and their habitats; and evaluating those risks to make siting, construction, and operation decisions. During the pre-construction tiers (Tiers 1, 2, and 3), developers are working to identify, avoid and minimize risks to species of concern. During post-construction tiers (Tiers 4 and 5), developers are assessing whether actions taken in earlier tiers to avoid and minimize impacts are successfully achieving the goals and, when necessary, taking additional steps to compensate for impacts. Subsequent tiers refine and build upon issues raised and efforts undertaken in previous tiers. Each tier offers a set of questions to help the developer evaluate the potential risk associated with developing a project at the given location.

Briefly, the tiers address:

- Tier 1 – Preliminary site evaluation (landscape-scale screening of possible project sites)
- Tier 2 – Site characterization (broad characterization of one or more potential project sites)
- Tier 3 – Field studies to document site wildlife and habitat and predict project impacts
- Tier 4 – Post-construction studies to estimate impacts¹
- Tier 5 – Other post-construction studies and research

The tiered approach provides the opportunity for evaluation and decision-making at each stage, enabling a developer to abandon or proceed with project development, or to collect additional information if required. This approach does not require that every tier, or every element within each tier, be implemented for every project. The Service anticipates that many distributed or community facilities will not need to follow the Guidelines beyond Tiers 1 and 2. Instead, the tiered approach allows efficient use of developer and wildlife agency resources with increasing levels of effort.

If sufficient data are available at a particular tier, the following outcomes are possible:

1. The project proceeds to the next tier in the development process without additional data collection.
2. The project proceeds to the next tier in the development process with additional data collection.
3. An action or combination of actions, such as project

¹ The Service anticipates these studies will include fatality monitoring as well as studies to evaluate habitat impacts.

modification, mitigation, or specific post-construction monitoring, is indicated.

4. The project site is abandoned because the risk is considered unacceptable.

If data are deemed insufficient at a tier, more intensive study is conducted in the subsequent tier until sufficient data are available to make a decision to modify the project, proceed with the project, or abandon the project.

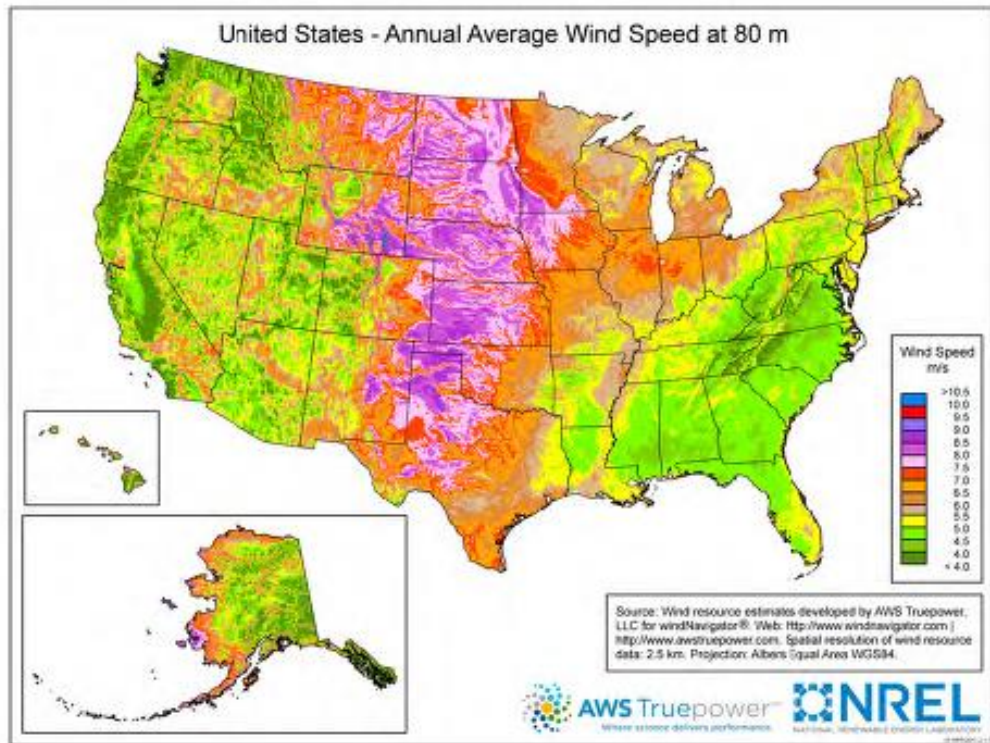
The most important thing a developer can do is to consult with the Service as early as possible in the development of a wind energy project. Early consultation offers the greatest opportunity for

avoiding areas where development is precluded or where wildlife impacts are likely to be high and difficult or costly to remedy or mitigate at a later stage. By consulting early, project developers can also incorporate appropriate wildlife conservation measures and monitoring into their decisions about project siting, design, and operation.

Adherence to the Guidelines is voluntary and does not relieve any individual, company, or agency of the responsibility to comply with laws and regulations. However, if a violation occurs the Service will consider a developer's documented efforts to communicate with the Service and adhere to the Guidelines. The Guidelines include a Communications Protocol which

provides guidance to both developers and Service personnel regarding appropriate communication and documentation.

The Guidelines also provide Best Management Practices for site development, construction, retrofitting, repowering, and decommissioning. For additional reference, a glossary of terms and list of literature cited are included in the appendices.



Wind Resource Map. Credit: NREL.