

NVDA Wind Study Committee Mtg #12

January 6, 2013, 10:00am, NVDA office and conference line

Present: Farley Brown, Jim Greenwood, Dave Snedeker, Mark Whitworth

Visitor: Amy Nixon, Caledonian Record

Guest: Gloria Bruce NEKTTA

The Northeast Kingdom Travel and Tourist Association was established in 1991. Executive Director Gloria Bruce has been there for the past seven years.

NEKTTA partners with local chambers of commerce and. Its goal is “destination development.” That is, the development of the NEK as a destination for travel and tourism.

NEKTTA is a membership organization and its 180 business members have positions on both sides of the industrial wind energy debate, so although it has been asked to take a position, NEKTTA has not taken one. Most of the comments that members make about turbines are negative. Less than 5% of the comments are positive—these comments relate to the belief that turbines reduce greenhouse gas emissions. NEKTTA was lobbied to oppose the KCW project (Lowell) and now the SMW project (Ferdinand).

Aesthetics

The region’s aesthetics and the impact that industrial wind turbines would have on the landscape is an important concern. NEKTTA regards the region’s landscape as one of its greatest sales tools. NEKTTA promotes it. The feedback that they have received on turbine aesthetic impacts is overwhelmingly negative (90% of people that contact them regard the impacts as negative; 10% say that turbines don’t matter).

The feedback about the Sheffield turbines’ aesthetic impacts upon the Crystal Lake viewshed is negative. There has been less feedback on Lowell turbines. Gloria suggests that this may be because there are no comparable recreational areas that include views of the Lowell turbines.

The reaction in Island Pond to the possibility of turbine development has been more negative than in other places (like Lowell) because tourism is a more important part of IP’s economy and the town is very protective of it.

Negative comments that NEKTTA received occurred more frequently during any projects “active phases” – planning, approval, and construction phases.

Recreation

There is concern that turbines will reduce access to recreation lands and that turbines will make recreation less enjoyable. There is concern among those who depend on existing and planned business

from snowmobilers, ATV riders, fishermen, cyclists, birdwatchers, and hunters. Turbines could potentially impact the quality of and level of second home/camp development in the I. Pond area.

Gloria reported negative feedback (anecdotal) from hunters and the portion of the economy that supports hunters (lodging, restaurants, guides, those with vacation homes, etc.). This could potentially reduce the number of return visits.

Hunters report that turbines are loud when they are operating. Hunters cannot communicate with one another even over short distances. Hunting under these conditions is not enjoyable; the hunters don't even want to be there. They fear that wildlife will flee the area and hunting will become pointless as well as unenjoyable. Gloria reports that moose hunters may be disappointed when they win permits (through lottery) to hunt moose in areas where turbines are located because the moose may be fewer in number than in other areas.

Gloria is not aware of scientific studies that show that turbines have degraded the quality of hunting. But there is a perception that hunting has been degraded by turbines and even this perception is damaging to an industry that is an important driver of the region's economy.

She noted that moose populations are down (the herd has been culled intentionally), that the state is issuing fewer permits, and moose hunters have been contributing hundreds of thousands of dollars less to the economy in recent years. She did not attribute decreasing numbers to industrial wind development.

She also noted that moose hunting is but a small part of the "hook and bullet" economy. She emphasized the importance of bird hunting.

National Geographic

The National Geographic Society selected the NEK as one of a small number of "geotourism" destinations." (7-8 years ago). The geotourism program is a worldwide project that supports the development of tourism that is geared towards the preservation of "what we value." Sustainability of place and culture is a geotourism goal. The Society has no opinion on industrial wind energy itself. Rather the Society would be concerned about the impact of industrial wind upon what we value and wish to preserve.

10:42am

Notes: M. Whitworth and D. Snedeker