



## Maine Appalachian Trail Club

Managing and maintaining 267 miles  
of the Appalachian Trail in Maine

### **FMI**

MATC Wind Power Committee Co-Chairs

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## **Wind Power Fact Sheet**

January 13, 2014

Wind Power projects in Maine are making headlines. To better understand MATC's role, Tony Barrett and Tom Lewis, co-chairs of the Maine Appalachian Trail Club's Wind Power Committee have provided this update.

### **MATC's History with Wind Power**

As stewards of the Appalachian Trail in Maine, our mission is to preserve the scenic integrity and minimize development impacts adjacent to the A.T.

To carry out this mission, MATC's Wind Power Committee was created in 2009 to monitor proposed wind power projects, research and assess their potential impact to the A.T. and make recommendations to the Executive Committee for action.

Current MATC Wind Power Committee membership includes Steve Clark, Laura Flight, Lester Kenway, Bill Millis and Milt Wright.

### **MATC is Pro-Appalachian Trail; Not Anti-Wind Power**

Both MATC & the Appalachian Trail Conservancy support significant increases in renewable energy including wind power. Its policies are to site projects appropriately, to design them to minimize impacts to the natural landscape near the A.T. and to protect the A.T. experience.

When the Maine Wind Energy Act was passed in 2008, there was only one grid scale wind project operating in Maine (Mars Hill). The turbines were less than 400 feet high and were built on a hill that had existing cell towers and a ski area.

Today the typical turbine is now about 20% higher. Additionally, the impact on the night sky from the flashing red warning lights that are installed on the turbines is visible. In general, when wind farms are located on ridgelines in undeveloped areas they are significantly more prominent landscape features than many of us anticipated they would be.

### **Why Changes to the Maine Wind Energy Act are Necessary**

In 2008 the law was passed as emergency legislation to create rules for a new industry, venturing into previously unregulated territory. Five years later we have been alarmed at the scale and amount of proposed projects. To use our limited resources in the highest and best ways, MATC decided it was time to recalibrate the Wind Energy Act to better balance wind power development and scenic impact.

### **A Legislative Briefing, as of January 2014**

MATC drafted and introduced legislation in January of 2013 to address several deficiencies in the Wind Power Act of 2008 and to mitigate future impact of wind power projects. MATC has not proposed amendments that address all of the issues, but has focused on issues that are most important and relevant to MATC's mission of protecting the Appalachian Trail and the experience that it offers.

### **Highlights of LD 1147: An Act to Protect Maine's Scenic Character**

LD 1147: [An Act to Protect Maine's Scenic Character](#) makes several important changes to the scenic impact provisions of the 2008 Wind Power Act governing grid-scale wind energy development.

The proposals made by MATC are not radical and will not stop wind power development in the state. This is not the goal of the legislation. Many of the proposed changes were recommendations in the recent report from the State's Office of Energy Independence and Security and others simply include the same review standards that are applicable to other large-scale developments in Maine. What the legislation does is provide more guidance to Maine's DEP with regard to scenic impacts.

The proposed legislation includes provisions that eliminate the provision that scenic impacts beyond 8-miles are insignificant; increases to 15 miles the distance for requiring visual impact assessments; establishes a "rebuttable presumption" that projects located within 15-miles of the most significant features of Maine's landscapes including the AT will have an unreasonable adverse impact; requires consideration of cumulative impacts in permitting decisions; and requires rules governing decommissioning plans for all permitted projects.

### **The Status of LD 1147, as of January 2014**

LD 1147 was introduced in early 2013 but was 'tabled' – meaning it will be reviewed this upcoming session. MATC will keep members apprised of the activity.

### **How MATC Members Can Ask Questions or Get Involved**

Wind power information - including links to the bill - are posted on MATC's website. Contact members of the MATC Wind Power Committee with questions or find ways to become involved.

We welcome the interest!

*January 13, 2014*