

To: Maine Legislature
Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee

Re: **Maine Wind Energy Act:** Report on experience
with and recommendations for changes



Maine
Appalachian
Trail Club

Managing and maintaining 267 miles
of the Appalachian Trail in Maine

The Maine Appalachian Trail Club (MATC) is a volunteer run, nonprofit corporation organized in 1935 to assume responsibility for the management, maintenance and protection of approximately 270 miles of the Appalachian Trail (AT) in Maine – from Grafton Notch to Katahdin. The MATC is not a hiking or outing club. It exists solely for the protection and perpetuation of the AT, as a National Scenic Trail and the only hiking trail specifically recognized by the Maine Legislature as a “primitive trail” under the Maine Trails System.

Since 2006, MATC has intervened in licensing proceedings for two grid scale wind energy projects and has commented upon others. Where MATC has opposed such projects, it has done so in order to protect the scenic values of the AT and the experience of remoteness that the AT offers to hikers who come from across this country and beyond to travel through the beautiful mountainous areas of the State.

Since the 2008 enactment of the Maine Wind Energy Act, much has been learned about the impacts of grid scale wind power development on both the natural and human environments., in particular, the major impacts on the landscapes of rural Maine. MATC is not opposed to wind power *per se* but feel strongly that projects must be appropriately sited.

The Wind Energy Act set new rules for a new industry and ventured into previously unlegislated territory. With that type of legislation, it is simply good public policy to review it in light of experience gained. At the direction of the Legislature, the State’s Office of Energy Independence and Security (OEIS) undertook such a review early in 2012 and produced the *Maine Wind Energy Development Assessment: Report and Recommendations – 2012*. Unfortunately, that Report was delivered to the Legislature late in the session and was not acted upon.

Using the OEIS Report as a starting point and expanding upon it, MATC is issuing the attached report on the Wind Energy Act and has prepared draft legislation to implement changes to the Act , which will address the inadequate attention to scenic landscapes of Maine’s mountains and lakes. The recommended changes are not radical and will not stop wind power development in Maine. Most of the concepts are found in the OEIS report and some are already part of Maine’s environmental protection laws but not now applied to wind power projects.

Maine has become the center of wind energy production in New England. It is time to look at how the siting of wind projects has affected Maine’s scenic landscapes which are so much a part of the “Maine brand” and to recalibrate the Wind Energy Act to better balance wind power development with protection of Maine’s “quality of place.”

Thomas D. Lewis, Chair, MATC Wind Committee