

Calls for Change at Nation's Deadliest Wind Turbines

In October 2012, ABC and seven other conservation organizations asked FWS to make changes at a deadly wind energy facility in western Maryland. According to the FWS, the 28-turbine Criterion Wind Project has killed more birds per turbine than any other facility studied in the U.S. — more than 16 birds per turbine.

“I cannot imagine that the state of Maryland is proud that the wind turbines of the first commercial wind power project in the state — a short drive from our nation’s capital — are the most deadly for birds in the entire country,” said George Fenwick, President of ABC.

This dubious distinction became public after FWS asked for comments on three documents concerning the project. The first was a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) of the existing and potential environmental impact of granting an Incidental Take Permit for the Project. The second was an application for an Incidental Take

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Permit, as required by the Endangered Species Act when activities will likely result in the killing or disturbance of a threatened or endangered species — in this case the endangered Indiana bat. FWS also asked for comments on a proposed Habitat Conservation Plan, which must be completed before a take permit can be issued.

The Criterion Wind Project began operation on Backbone Mountain in December 2010. Maryland conservationists who were concerned that the owners of the project would kill endangered bats immediately sued,

and the owners agreed to apply for an Incidental Take Permit for the bat.

Although the take permit would be for an endangered bat, federal law requires the government to analyze the impacts of the project on all wildlife, including birds. It was during that analysis that the Criterion Wind Project’s high bird mortality came to light.

ABC and partners have asked for more extensive environmental analysis of the project, such as surveying for eagles during the times they are most likely to be present at the site. Depending on what these surveys show, the project may pose a greater risk to eagles than currently thought, and extra measures to protect them may be needed.

ABC has also asked FWS to choose the operational alternative that includes nighttime curtailment of turbines during the peak of fall migration, which is the only alternative that the EA predicted would lower the number of birds killed by this project.



Photo courtesy of Britt Thal

A Legacy of Bird Conservation

Join the growing number of bird conservation supporters who have created a legacy for birds by including ABC in their estate plans. Here’s what longtime supporters Steve and Britt Thal say about ABC:

“We believe ABC provides the best insurance that birds will continue to bring pleasure to those who value their company. In these difficult economic times, we were looking for ways to continue to support ABC’s programs. What better way to accomplish this than by including ABC in our will? It is a wonderful way for people like us, with a fixed income, to give to an organization that so reliably delivers conservation results for birds.”

We hope that others will join us in helping support ABC in perpetuity.

If you have already included American Bird Conservancy in your estate plans, or if you would like more information on how to join ABC’s Legacy Circle, please contact ABC Planned Giving Director Jack Morrison at 540-253-5780, or jmorrison@abcbirds.org.