

POSITION STATEMENT

The Illinois Chapter of The Wildlife Society

PLACEMENT AND OPERATION OF WIND FARMS

The Illinois Chapter of The Wildlife Society (ICTWS) represents professional wildlife biologists in the State of Illinois. Recently, several "wind farms" (i.e., a site with one or more wind turbines used for electrical energy generation) have been proposed within the state, and it is probable that additional ones will follow. While the ICTWS supports the concept of "green energy," the membership has serious concerns regarding the placement and operation of some proposed wind farms.

There are many reports of "bird-strike" mortality associated with wind farms. Due to its geographic location, Illinois is a major fall and spring migration corridor for waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, and many songbirds. Reports also indicate that additional monitoring and research on the effects of wind farms on migrating bats as well as effects on habitat fragmentation are needed. At present, the placement of wind farms are reviewed on an individual project basis with little evaluation of their cumulative impacts across the landscape. It would be a sad irony that technology intended to protect the environment ultimately would have detrimental effects on wildlife populations and their habitats.

The ICTWS recommends the Governor of the State of Illinois create a committee of wind industry officials, natural resource professionals, and elected officials, and authorize it to:

- 1) Research current literature about wind farms and their individual and cumulative effects on wildlife populations and habitats, and
- 2) Document what subject areas for which information is limited or lacking. We suggest that the Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS) or similar entity would be instrumental in this endeavor.
- 3) Work with the INHS, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to develop standard and scientifically valid evaluation and monitoring protocols including those already approved by the USFWS to assess potential impacts of wind farms on wildlife populations and habitats at a local, regional, and statewide basis.
- 4) Develop siting and operational protocols to avoid or mitigate wildlife habitat fragmentation as well as bird, bat, and other wildlife species mortality. Suggested protocols include deactivating wind farm units during peak seasonal migration periods and/or by placing wind farms outside major migration routes and away from resource rich areas.

By engaging all interested parties in the development of such protocols, the ICTWS is confident that potential negative impacts on wildlife and their habitats by wind farms can be avoided or minimized while taking advantage of this non-polluting energy source. In addition, if all stakeholders have a hand in developing the protocols, there is a higher likelihood that the protocols will be adopted and implemented during wind farm siting and operation.

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