

February 25, 2013

Marin County Board of Supervisors

Via Email: bos@marincounty.org

**Re: Local Coastal Program Amendments (LCPA), Fifth Board Public Hearing - Remaining carryover topics related to Agriculture, Biological Resources, Community Design, Community Development, Wind Energy Conversion Systems (WECS), Transportation, Maps (Categorical Exclusion Areas), and Coastal Permit Administration**

Dear Marin County Board of Supervisors,

West Marin Sonoma Coastal Advocates (WMSCA) would like to reiterate the following positions opposing the installation of WECS in Marin County's Coastal Zone:

**1. Adoption of LCPA permitting 100-foot WECS defies the California Coastal Plan:**

Marin is the first coastal county to be challenged with industrial-scale wind turbine proposals within the Coastal Zone. The adoption of the LCPA permitting 100-foot WECS will impact the entire 1100-mile California Coastal Zone by setting a precedent to open up all coastal counties to industrial wind energy development. This defies the intent of the California Coastal Plan which is to preserve and protect agricultural and scenic resources.

**2. Insufficient wind resource in Marin County's Coastal Zone:**

Wind speed maps from the California Energy Commission (CEC) show that there are only marginal wind resources in Marin County's Coastal Zone (see attached 30-meter elevation wind speed map of Marin County). These maps illustrate wind speeds at 30-, 50-, 70- and 100-meter elevations. Industrial-scale development of wind energy in the Coastal Zone is not economically feasible. There is no commercially marketable wind in the Coastal Zone.

**3. Impacts on viewshed, tourism, property values, Highway One and the California Coastal Trail:**

Impacts from the installation of industrial-scale wind turbines have been documented worldwide such as viewshed destruction, loss of tourism and reduced property values. In Marin County tourism generates 85 million dollars in local business for Point Reyes National Seashore (PRNS) with 2.2 million visitors annually. Development of industrial-scale turbines would compromise views on both sides of Highway One, directly impacting scenic values and, therefore, economic values from decreased tourism. Scenic views along the California Coastal Trail which runs on the East side of Highway One would also be compromised. Additionally the County's WECS Ordinance would allow turbines of unlimited height (one per 20 acres) in the adjoining Agricultural Production Zone, further impacting the viewshed.

**4. Wildlife impacts:**

There are well-established documented negative impacts to birds and bats, including California species of special concern, from collisions with meteorological towers and wind turbines. Organic and traditional agriculture will suffer when nocturnal and diurnal insect predators are killed.

**5. Increased carbon footprint and infrastructure impacts:**

There is an increased carbon footprint for WECS from the manufacture, delivery and installation of industrial-scale wind turbines. The construction of wind turbine power plants requires aggregates, lime, rare earth elements from China, massive excavations for tower foundations, road width expansion and

reinforcement to facilitate delivery of turbine components in oversized trucks. Rural roads in West Marin can't handle these impacts. Additionally, turbine facilities require infrastructure such as access roads which can be cut diagonally across farmers' fields, transmission corridors and transmission lines, compromising agricultural uses.

#### **6. Wind energy versus solar power:**

Wind's viability and reliability does not compare favorably to solar installations on existing rooftops, over parking lots and retrofitted homes. For example, the turbine at McEvoy Ranch in Marin County was hit by lightning and was out of commission for ten months. In contrast, the solar components at the ranch continued to function and produce electricity during that time.

#### **7. Marin County Board of Supervisors (BOS) LCPA Workshop #1, March 20, 2012:**

Jack Liebster stated the following in reference to the CEC 30-meter elevation wind speed map of Marin County (attached): "This is a map provided by the CEC and it's really when you get up into the pink and red color there that you have a significant resource. This isn't the final word but it is an indication that perhaps the wind resources along our part of the coast are not as commercially significant as other areas."

Supervisor Steve Kinsey stated: "You know I had been clear that we do not want industrial-scale wind energy in West Marin. There's no need for it, no demand for that scale, and the transmission facilities to bring wind all the way back would be so significantly costly and disruptive that it isn't viable. If we're really creating a relatively marginal or limited opportunity for wind, then why bother, why not just make it a Wind Energy Free Zone?"

#### **8. WMSCA California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lawsuit and California Coastal Commission (CCC) appeal:**

On December 6, 2011, the Marin County BOS set aside permits it granted for two meteorological research towers near Tomales proposed by NextEra Energy, Inc. The Board also set aside the project's categorical exemption from environmental review. The Coastal Permits were approved without requiring the preparation of an initial study as required under CEQA. The Marin County Planning Commission had denied the permits but the Board reversed the Commission's decision. This formed the basis of WMSCA's January 2011 lawsuit in Marin County Superior Court. The lawsuit requested that the County set aside the NextEra project and conduct environmental review before any further consideration of approval, in light of serious environmental concerns. WMSCA also filed an appeal to the CCC, along with Marin Audubon and the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin. Two Coastal Commissioners filed appeals individually. The Board's set-aside of the project and categorical exemption, agreed to by NextEra, accomplished the precise goals of the environmental lawsuit.

#### **9. CEQA Categorical Exemption:**

WMSCA strongly requests an EIR for the LCPA Update if it includes WECS. Proposition 20 required the State of California to preserve, protect and restore the California coast. Succeeding coastal legislation requires a full EIR should Marin, or any coastal county, decide industrial wind will be allowed on over 37,000 acres in their Coastal Zone, as does Marin's proposed LCP. WECS to 40-feet will be allowed on 18,125 acres West of Highway One and WECS to 100-feet will be allowed on 19,448 acres East of Highway One.

The use of a categorical exemption to exempt the Marin County LCP, with its provisions for industrial wind, from an EIR, is in conflict with and in violation of CEQA. The LCP, as currently written, introduces a new industrial use to the Coastal Zone. In the case of allowing a higher, more intense use, especially a new industrial use in the Coastal Zone, an EIR is necessary.



Avian mortality from industrial-scale wind turbines has been well-documented throughout California. Wind turbines will cause significant adverse impacts on the Coastal Zone's listed bird and bat species, including Osprey, White-tailed Kite, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle, Merlin, American Kestrel, Barn Owl, Great Horned Owl, Burrowing Owl, and the state endangered Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon.

The inclusion of industrial wind in West Marin's LCP, including areas such as Tomales Bay, designated by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands as a "Wetland of International Importance" and recognized as an "Important Bird Area" by the National Audubon Society, without first completing an EIR, must not go forward. Industrial wind will not only threaten coastal resources, it will destroy coastal avian populations.

Marin County should not be putting resident and migratory bird species listed under both the state and federal environmental laws at risk without first preparing an EIR. **WMSCA urges that all references to industrial wind, both on the West and East sides of Highway One, be dropped from the LCP.**

### Conclusion

The creation of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) and PRNS, 40 and 50 years ago respectively, is part of Marin County's environmental legacy. GGNRA and PRNS, along with Marin Agricultural Land Trust and the California Coastal Act, all serve to remind us of the courageous decisions made in the face of huge development pressures.

WMSCA wholeheartedly supports Supervisor Kinsey's insightful proposal for a "Wind Energy Free (Coastal) Zone" to preserve and protect California's coastal resources in West Marin for future generations.


Respectfully submitted on behalf of WMSCA,



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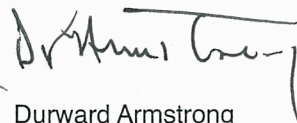
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Enclosure:

1. CEC 30-meter elevation wind speed map of Marin County

Cc:

North Central Coast District Supervisor, California Coastal Commission





**Legend**

**Substations**

- Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E)
- All Other Substations \*

**Transmission Lines**  
(Color according to Utility Ownership)

- ..... 33 - 92KV
- - - 110 - 161KV
- 220 - 287KV
- x-x- 345 - 500KV
- 500KV - DC

**Other Features**

- City/Town
- == Major Roads
- Roads
- ✈ Airport/Airfield
- ☪ Water Body
- ▭ County Line

**Wind Speed Legend**

Mean Speed at 30 m

mph	m/s
< 10.1	< 4.5
10.1 - 11.2	4.5 - 5.0
11.2 - 12.3	5.0 - 5.5
12.3 - 13.4	5.5 - 6.0
13.4 - 14.5	6.0 - 6.5
14.5 - 15.7	6.5 - 7.0
15.7 - 16.8	7.0 - 7.5
16.8 - 17.9	7.5 - 8.0
17.9 - 19.0	8.0 - 8.5
> 19.0	> 8.5

Scale: 1:300,000  
1 in = 5 miles

Scale bar: 0, 1.25, 2.5, 5 miles