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Wind turbines - many
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Power struggle

Wind advocate, foe take sides in tower fight

By ANNE WALLACE ALLEN
The Associated Press

LONDONDERRY — Opponents Rob Roy Macgregor and Sam Lloyd have a lot in common. Both love the outdoors and the ridgeline views in the mountains where they've chosen to live. And both are environmentalists concerned about Vermont's future.

But the two have come down on opposite sides in the debate over a wind turbine project proposed for Glebe Mountain in Londonderry.

Lloyd is a leader of the Glebe Mountain Group, formed to fight the project; Macgregor is a leader of Fairwinds Vermont, created a few months ago to counter Lloyd's well-organized and well-financed group.

"Somebody needs to say something," said the low-key Macgregor, 40, on a break from his job at the Viking Nordic Center. "Certain things needed to be said in the face of misinformation coming from the wind opponents."

Londonderry is one of several Vermont towns facing a proposed wind power project. In this case, Catamount Energy, a subsidiary of Central Vermont Public Service Corp.,

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has applied to state regulators for permission to put up wind measurement towers. One is already in place.

Catamount has said it might build as many as 27 330-foot wind turbines, some on ridge-line owned by the Magic Mountain ski area and some on land owned by a Windham resident.

Soon after Catamount announced its plans, some local residents and property owners formed the Glebe Mountain Group to oppose the idea. The group cited concerns about 24-hour lighting and destruction of high-elevation habitat.

"We'd be giving up something that is quite precious in Vermont — what you might call the purity of Vermont's ridgelines," said Lloyd, a Weston resident and state Environmental Board member who is co-chairman of the Glebe Mountain Group.

Macgregor loves the mountains too — he's a longtime skier, hiker and mountain biker, and he knows the Glebe ridgeline well. He wants to see turbines up there.

"It's like baby steps," Macgregor said. "If Vermont doesn't have the social and political vision to take the first steps, what is the incentive for another state to do it?"

Both groups believe they might be working to avert an environmental crisis.

Macgregor and his partner in Fairwinds, Weston architect Keith Dewey, think the crisis will be caused by the world's reliance on fossil fuels.

"What trumps all of the aesthetic conversations is the fact that we're environmentally doing some very nasty things to the planet," said Dewey.

Lloyd thinks the crisis might come if Vermont relaxes its strict building standards — especially regarding projects about 2,500-foot elevation — to allow the turbines on its mountains.

"If somehow that environmental backbone is dismembered, what will be next in Vermont's environmental ethic



AP Photo by Tim Roske

Rob Roy Macgregor stands at the Viking Nordic Center in Londonderry with Glebe Mountain in the background.

to be laid aside?" Lloyd asked.

Neither Fairwinds nor the Glebe Mountain Group has much faith in a series of meetings, known as "the collaborative process," that has brought all interested parties together to discuss the Londonderry project.

"There's no way any information is going to come out of this process that is going to convince Glebe Mountain Group to do anything but try to stop it, tooth and nail," said Macgregor.

"There's so little to negotiate in the matter," said Lloyd, whose group might drop out of the process altogether. "There's either a wind farm or there isn't."

Both groups feel the battle being waged in Londonderry is relevant to all the existing and proposed wind projects in Vermont.

"To my mind, it's just one part of the whole picture, and the whole picture is the whole state," Lloyd said.

And each believes the public could be swayed to his side — if only the correct information could come out.

"It's just plain common sense as far as I'm concerned," Macgregor said. "The wind, it blows, and it's free. There's got to be a better solution than sending people to Iraq to preserve our access to the oil."

For now, each group is wag-

ing a public relations campaign and waiting for a chance to speak before the Public Service Board, which will decide whether Catamount can get a state permit for the wind measurement towers.

Lloyd, who is in his 70s, is well-known in Vermont as an environmentalist and former state lawmaker who was chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee.

Macgregor, 49, is a full-time stonemason and ski tuner who hasn't voted since college but plans to register this year.

So far, Fairwinds has testified at some hearings on wind power and has started an Internet Listserve for the exchange of information about wind. Macgregor said the group has about 45 members statewide, and is looking for more.

In some things, the groups are far apart. Macgregor sees the Glebe Mountain Group as a group of wealthy second-home owners who want their view preserved at all cost.

"It's a David and Goliath situation," he said. "We're not well-heeled enough to hire lawyers and public relations people."

Glebe Mountain Group does have lawyers and a lobbyist — but Lloyd said it also has plenty of non-wealthy residents — and some who, like him, have no ridgeline view.

"While there are a number of second-homers vitally involved in this opposition, no question about it...any number of old-timers here whose own lands would not be affected are strongly opposed to it," he said.

Lloyd doesn't say much about renewable energy, though he notes wind towers work well in some locations, such as areas of the West with low population density.

For Dewey and Macgregor, renewable energy is a top priority. They don't mind the way wind towers look.

"I'm not in favor of all wind projects. I'm in favor of a logical, sensible wind project," Dewey said. "Each town, developer, site, is uniquely different, and needs to be evaluated differently."



Wind power views divided

By SUSAN SMALLHEER
Herald Staff

Vermonters from Burlington to Weston to Westmore were sharply divided over wind power developments during a legislative hearing Wednesday at Rutland High School.

Wind power appeared to be in the eye of the beholder, as wind turbines were described as things of beauty or an abomination of Vermont's natural landscape.

The House Natural Resources and Energy Committee held a second public hearing on proposed legislation that would put wind development under the jurisdiction of Act 250, in addition to the state's utility law, Act 248. It would also impose a three-year moratorium on the development of any wind projects.

Committee members heard the black and white of wind energy — that it would ruin Vermont's beautiful landscape, or that it was an important first step toward making Vermont less dependent on polluting fossil fuels.

The Douglas administration is coming up with guidelines for the use of state lands for wind energy development, and is holding a series of eight public meetings

drive from the Northeast Kingdom, where a controversial wind energy project in East Haven has generated a great deal of opposition.

Katy Anderson, of the Northeast Kingdom town of Westmore, said that Vermont's ridgelines were an integral part of its beauty. She said to sacrifice the mountains for a small amount of wind power is "a short term economy."
Rep. William Johnson, R-Canaan, chairman of the House Natural Resources and Energy Committee, said that the majority of people speaking at another committee hearing last week in Lyndonville were in favor of the legislation.

But Johnson said that people who opposed the development of the wind project were probably more motivated to turn out. Johnson said that his committee would start taking testimony on House bill 697 in the next few weeks.

Snow region. It has not affected property values either, he said. He also said it hasn't had a negative effect on wildlife in the area.

"We've got to see the forest for the trees," Berkowitz said. Clay Turnbull of White River Junction said he had initially opposed the Searsburg wind project over concerns about the impact to wildlife. But Turnbull said he was a complete convert and now thought the project was beautiful. Several people spoke in favor of the state developing its wind energy resources and cited the threat of global warming as the most important environmental problem facing the world.

Michael Rowe of Mount Holly said it was time the state woke up to the full environmental costs of its source of electric power, including nuclear waste from Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant. "We're stuck with it," he said of the highly radioactive waste. Several people made the long

mountain to allow for construction of the towers.

Ann Bernhardt of South Londonderry said that the Glebe Mountain project would have a profound negative effect on the region's tourism and real estate economies.

Bernhardt also said that development on the mountain could affect water quality for residents living in the valley. Leon Mear of Andover said his town is being held hostage by the Glebe Mountain project since his town received an estimate of \$100,000 to hire an attorney to challenge the project. He said the entire town budget is \$400,000.

"Andover is being silenced by its poverty," he said. John Berkowitz of Putney, executive director of Southern Vermonters for a Fair Economy and Environmental Protection, told the panel that during town meeting in 2003, 90 towns considered a resolution urging the state to develop more renewable power. He said that 79 of the 90 towns passed the resolution.

Berkowitz said the state's only commercial wind farm — an 11-turbine system in Searsburg — had been accepted by the community and hadn't driven tourism away from the Mount

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starting next month in Springfield.

Many residents came from the Londonderry-Weston area, where Catamount Energy, a subsidiary of Central Vermont Public Service Corp., has proposed a 50 megawatt project on Glebe Mountain. That proposal includes 27 turbines with towers and blades taller than the Bennington Monument — more than 300 feet tall.

Because the towers and blades would be over 200 feet, they would have to be lit.

"While Vermont's ridgelines would be sacrificed, there's probably no guarantee that the power would stay in state, one resident said.

"I'm skeptical that Vermonters are getting a good deal," said Tim Goodwin of Weston. He said he would see the proposed Glebe Mountain project from his home.

The tax incentives for developers like Catamount could be sold to other developers, he said.

"And for this, we're sacrificing our ridgelines," Goodwin said. Sam Lloyd of Weston, one of the leaders against the Glebe Mountain project, urged the committee to put wind projects under Act 250 because the project would create clearcuts on the