

Wind energy backers talk strategy

By SUSAN SMALLHEER

Herald Staff

Concerned that an ill wind is blowing through the public debate on wind energy in the state, Rep. Bernard Sanders, I-Vt., has invited wind energy proponents to meet today to strategize.

Sanders said he was dedicated to getting Vermont and the rest of the country off its dependency on fossil fuel and nuclear power, and is meeting with wind proponents

to discuss progress in Vermont.

"I am very interested in seeing the growth of sustainable energy," Sanders said, noting he had secured funding in the past for renewable energy projects and was in the process of securing "major" funding for research into hydrogen fuel cells.

"The bottom line is, I want to move this state and this country away from polluting fuels," Sanders said Friday.

Several people invited to the meeting late this afternoon said Sanders wants to discuss strategy in the light of increasing public opposition to the placement of wind turbines on Vermont's ridgelines.

Opposition to the half-dozen wind energy projects under discussion has centered in the Londonderry and East Haven areas.

Catamount Energy, a subsidiary of Central Vermont Public Service Corp., has proposed a 30-mega-

watt-wind project for Glebe Mountain in Londonderry and Winhall. And Montpelier developer Matthew Rubin has proposed a four-turbine project in the Northeast Kingdom of East Haven.

Both projects have well-organized opposition.

In recent weeks, a group of a half-dozen Northeast Kingdom legislators have introduced a bill

See Page A7: Wind

Wind

Continued From Page A1

calling for a three-year moratorium on any wind projects, and also calling for the wind projects to come under Act 250 jurisdiction as well.

Sanders said he was sympathetic to people's concerns about the aesthetics of wind turbines. The current generation of designs call for towers and turbines that are more than 300 feet tall and would have to be illuminated at night.

"There is a concern about the aesthetic, and we have to be sen-

sitive to that, and we will be," Sanders said.

Dorothy Schnure, spokeswoman for Green Mountain Power, which operates the only commercial wind project in Vermont in the southern Vermont town of Searsburg, said that GMP senior vice president Stephen Terry would attend Sanders' meeting.

"We're always happy to see people interested in wind," Schnure said. "It's important to talk."

Green Mountain Power is currently in serious discussions about expanding its Searsburg operation to an adjoining ridgeline to Mount Waldo, some of which

would be in the Green Mountain National Forest.

GMP wants to add 22 turbines, considerably higher — 300 feet rather than the current 198 feet — to the current 11-turbine project. The project would generate an additional 33 megawatts of power.

By comparison, Entergy Nuclear has applied for permission to generate an additional 110 megawatts of power at Vermont Yankee.

Schnure said GMP is working with a group of stakeholders in a collaborative process to address concerns before the application is finalized. A similar process is also

under way with the Glebe Mountain project.

Conservation Law Foundation attorney Mark Sinclair, who has been involved in the collaborative process on the Glebe Mountain and Searsburg projects, said some of the opponents to wind energy are full of "hypocrisy."

Some ski area managers in the Northeast Kingdom have come out against the proposed East Haven project, and he said they are forgetting the damage done by the resorts to Vermont's mountainsides and ecosystems.

Sinclair said that Jay Peak general manager William Stenger had been particularly vocal against the

East Haven project.

"He's been building in black bear habitat, and taking water of the streams, and now all of a sudden nobody else can develop on the mountains? That's a double standard," Sinclair said.

"There won't be any good snow to ski on if we don't start doing something on global warming," he said.

Others have criticized the wind turbine plans as hurting real estate sales.

Andrew Perchlik, executive director of Renewable Energy Vermont, an organization that promotes wind power and other energy sources, said he's pleased

Sanders is holding the meeting.

He said a lot of misinformation has been presented as fact at hearings about the East Haven project.

"There's been a lot of misinformation about wind energy — that it's unreliable, that it only runs 30 percent of the time and you need 100 percent backup, and without the federal subsidies it wouldn't be possible. And that it kills and is damaging to wildlife, as well as scaring off the tourists," Perchlik said, listing the common litany of concerns.

"We need to rally the troops," he said.

Contact Susan Smallheer at susan.smallheer@rutlandherald.com.

Sanders: Wind energy effort needs better PR

By SUSAN SMALLHEER
Herald Staff

Most Vermonters support the development of sustainable and renewable energy, including wind power, and proponents must do a better job of selling the idea, Rep. Bernard Sanders, I-Vt., said Monday.

Sanders met with about a dozen wind energy proponents behind closed doors in Burlington late Monday afternoon to discuss the state of wind energy in the Green Mountain State,

and why proponents seem to be losing the public relations battle to opponents at this early stage.

"There is frustration because polling shows that the overwhelming number of Vermonters support renewable energy," Sanders said in an interview after the meeting.

"The proponents have not done as good a job as they might explaining the environmental benefits and the

See Page A10: Wind

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Wind

Continued From Page A1

economic benefits, particularly job creation," Sanders said.

"I hope what comes out of the meeting is a better degree of coordination," he said.

Several people who attended the meeting at Sanders' Burlington office refused to comment, saying there was an agreement that it was Sanders' meeting and he would do the talking.

Vermont's congressman said he wanted to help wean Vermont off fossil fuels, and he said some experts believe that up to 10 percent of Vermont's power needs could come from wind energy.

He said that wind energy is the fastest-growing energy sector, both in the United States and in Europe.

"There's a frustration that people are afraid that there's going to be a wind turbine on every ridge in Vermont," Sanders said.

Sanders said there were environmental groups, representatives from wind developers, and the state's major utilities — both of which have wind projects on the wing — at the meeting.

Green Mountain Power owns the only commercial wind project in the state, the 11-turbine test project in the southern Vermont town of Searsburg. That project has been operating for about six years.

Green Mountain is now working with the U.S. Forest Service and other partners on plans to expand the project into the neighboring Green Mountain National Forest, tripling its size and increasing the size of the turbines and blades by 50 percent to 300 feet. The project would generate 33 megawatts.

The shift from just under 200 feet to 300 feet, which is taller

than the Bennington Monument, will require that the towers be lit at all times.

Catamount Energy, a subsidiary of Central Vermont Public Service Corp., the state's largest utility, has proposed a 30-megawatt, 27-turbine project for private land on Glebe Mountain in Londonderry and ~~Winhall~~ ^{Windham}, the site of Magic Mountain Ski Area.

And Matthew Rubin of Montpelier has proposed a four-turbine wind project in the town of East Haven, in the Northeast Kingdom.

It is Rubin's project, proposed for the site of a defunct radar base, that has galvanized opposition in the Northeast Kingdom, and spawned proposed legislation that would impose a three-year moratorium on wind projects.

The Catamount project for Glebe Mountain, which is in the planning stages, also has a well-organized and financed opposition group.

There are several other wind projects under consideration — one in Manchester and several others in the Northeast Kingdom.

The Douglas administration is about to start holding public meetings on the use of state lands for wind energy in preparation for coming up with a state policy on the issue by mid-June. The first hearing is slated for March 15 in Springfield and hearings are scheduled all over the state.

Sanders said those attending the meeting Monday expressed frustration with what they called "misinformation" about wind development that was being spread by opponents.

"They talked about the most effective ways to counter-act that," he said.

"These are very bright people with a lot of energy. They must improve their contacts with the Legislature, with ordinary people throughout the state," the congressman said.

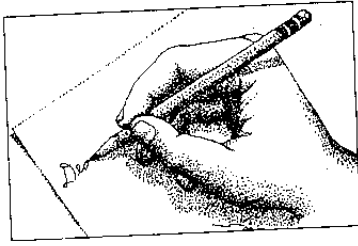
The proposed legislation, which is in the House Natural Resources and Energy Committee, would also bring wind projects before the state's land-use law, Act 250, as well as Act 248, the state's utility review law.

Contact Susan Smallheer at susan.smallheer@rutlandherald.com.

*Jim and Lee
Thought you might
be interested in
reading the enclosed*

again, thank you

Yrsula



Ruining vistas for wind power

In response to Susan Smallheer's article entitled, "Sanders: Wind energy effort needs better PR," in which she quotes the congressman as saying, "There's a frustration that people are afraid that there's going to be a wind turbine on every ridge in Vermont." This is, in fact, for many of us the real issue — towers will not be everywhere, just in the Londonderry area as well as Searsburg and East Haven.

The point being, some of us will have our ridgelines destroyed by Orwellian monsters soaring 300 feet into the sky lit at night like the Newark airport. We in our small towns get to see our mountains bulldozed to dirt and have to listen to birds get slaughtered by propellers during migration periods while Bernie is in Burlington exhorting wind power and the Catamount Energy folks count their tax breaks in Montpelier.

How would Bernie feel, I wonder, if Mansfield or the other northern Green Mountains, or for that matter, the shoreline of Champlain near Burlington, close to Sanders' home, were sited as sources for wind-generated energy?

The answer might be what is going on in Massachusetts, where Senator Kennedy, his nephew Robert — the noted conservation attorney — and their friends, including retired newscaster Walter Cronkite, all dis-

Clean energy is needed

Thank you for the editorial urging open-mindedness when it comes to wind energy development. In addition to the observations about all of our energy sources having some kind of destructive impact, I would add this one question: How many of us even see utility poles anymore? I imagine there were plenty of people who thought they were a blight on the landscape when they first appeared; there were probably many more who were grateful to have light at night. In this time when human activity and resulting pollution seriously threaten the future of our planet, we need to be looking at the greatest good. All of us use energy; we are all responsible for cleaning up our mess. Surely the need for clean energy for many outweighs the need for pristine views for a few.

MELISSA

CHESNUT-TANGERMAN
Middletown Springs

Aesthetic appeal of wind turbines

With the recent attention given to proposals for wind turbines on ridgelines, and Governor Douglas' desire for a state policy, I'm hopeful that some of the wind farms proposed for Vermont will get expeditious approval. Some of the opponents of these projects have legitimate concerns, particularly on the effects on wildlife. But it disturbs me that there is so much opposition on the basis of aesthetics. One of the reasons I would like to see wind projects on our ridgelines is — aesthetics. I see beauty in a church steeple and a farm silo. I see beauty in the graceful curves of the Crown Point Bridge. I see beauty in light-houses.

Why is it that wind turbines are prejudged as one of man's uglies, not to be allowed to deface our landscape? We can't afford to be ashamed of all the utilitarian changes we make on the face of this planet. I believe we must learn to see beauty in these great and necessary works.

There is beauty in increased energy efficiency; in energy independence. There is beauty in the reduced reliance on fossil fuels and in the reductions in pollution and global warming resulting from the use of fossil fuels.

Who complains of flickering headlights of cars crossing the bridge? Who complains of the light from a lighthouse? Why should there be a complaint about the lights on wind turbines?

Think about it. Aesthetics is not a reason to oppose wind farms.

The alternative to wind farms is smog from Midwestern power plants which blots out many of the distant views of those ridgelines, mercury pollution of our lakes, devalued fish catches and destruction of our forests due to acid rain. There's no beauty in that.

GORDON CAWOOD
Leicester

3/2/04

Forest official rejects wind project land swap

By **SUSAN SMALLHEER**
Herald Staff

The supervisor of the Green Mountain National Forest has denied a proposed land swap for the expansion of the state's only commercial wind project, a project that would make Vermont the first state in the country to have a wind farm on national forest land.

Forest supervisor Paul Brewster turned down a request from enXco, the French partner of Green Mountain Power Co., to

"If we exchanged the tracts in Searsburg and Readsboro, there would have been a lot of broken ownership and it would have carved out areas along the ridgelines."

Paul Brewster
Green Mountain National Forest

swap 1,150 acres in Glastenbury for between 200 and 300 acres in the national forest near the existing Searsburg wind farm.

Brewster said that his denial of the swap was not the end of the project. The project must now go through an environmen-

tal impact statement, part of the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA.

"The ball is now in enXco's court," he said.

Brewster said Friday that he turned down the swap because of 70 years of history behind the Green Mountain National Forest, and the fact that the swap would have fragmented the national forest holdings in the Searsburg-Readsboro area.

"In the end, I said no because of our

history of acquisitions on the national forest, for over 70 years to build the forest," Brewster said. "If we exchanged the tracts in Searsburg and Readsboro, there would have been a lot of broken ownership and it would have carved out areas along the ridgelines. It leads to all sorts of management problems."

Brewster said he was surprised to learn that the enXco-Green Mountain Power

See Page A7: **Wind**



FILE / RUTLAND HERALD

A Green Mountain National Forest official has rejected a request for a land swap that would have allowed the Searsburg wind farm to expand onto national forest land.

Wind

Continued From Page A1

project would be the first time any of the 102 million acres in national forests all over the country was utilized to generate electricity.

"This would be the first," he said.

He said it is not the first commercial wind project on national land, however, noting that there are quite a few wind power projects on land managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

"We will be using the BLM's procedures and processes for analyzing the wind development; they've had a number of projects in the past," Brewster said.

"It's certainly worthy of consideration," he said of the Vermont project. "I think Vermont in many

ways is ahead of this issue on a statewide basis. The Forest Service as an agency is interested in renewable energy projects, there's certainly no prohibition."

Brewster said there is another proposed wind project on the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia.

"They aren't as far along. In Vermont, it's a current facility expanding," he said.

Environmentalists had raised questions about the proposed land swap, since the land in question is prime black bear habitat. And part of the expansion of the wind project would impinge on the Lamb Brook roadless area of the Green Mountain National Forest, some of which is proposed for designation as wilderness area, which prohibits logging and motorized vehicles of all kinds.

Jon Zimmerman of Vermont Environmental Research Associates, a consultant for enXco, said that Brewster's decision was non-appealable.

"Not that we would appeal," he said.

"It is not discouraging; at least the Forest Service has clarified the course of action that needs to be taken," Zimmerman said. "In that sense, it's a good thing."

"The federal review process could take a year or two easily — 18 months is not unusual," Zimmerman said. He said the developer had wanted to have a clear deed to the land that the additional 20 to 30 turbines would sit on. EnXco and Green Mountain Power want to generate about 30 to 40 additional megawatts of power with bigger and higher turbines.

The existing Searsburg wind proj-

ect includes 11 turbines, with a total height of 198 feet, and generates 6.5 megawatts of power.

Brewster said the 1,150 acres of land in Glastenbury that would have been added to the Green Mountain National Forest is owned by Trenor Scott of Oregon. He said the forest service would be interested in purchasing the last Scott parcel in Glastenbury. Over the last 27 years, the Scott family has sold 30,000 acres in Glastenbury and Woodford to the Green Mountain National Forest.

He said that Trenor Scott had held on to the last remaining private parcel of land in the unincorporated town because of its potential for wind energy.

"It would be very expensive to develop, however," Brewster said.

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