



OUR NATIONAL SYMBOL: ENDANGERED AGAIN

From AP news: Headline: Final Wind Turbine Rule Permits Thousands of Eagle Deaths *

Summarized, the Obama administration, in December, 2016, updated and modified existing regulations allowing 30-year permits to be issued for the “incidental taking” of eagles and other species. AP reports that “under the new rule, wind companies and other power providers will not face a penalty if they kill or injure up to 4,200 bald eagles, nearly four times the current limit. Deaths of the more rare golden eagles would be allowed without penalty so long as companies minimize losses by taking steps such as retrofitting power poles to reduce the risk of electrocution.” Obama Fish and Wildlife director Dan Ashe states that “The new rule will conserve eagles while also spurring development of a pollution-free energy source intended to ease global warming.”

It's tough to decide which part of this fallacy to address first. Remember that every technological system ever devised, including wind energy has its disadvantages. In this case, besides being unreliable, economically unsustainable, and also a contributor to pollution, it is well-established that wind energy is definitely not in harmony with its surroundings, read native flora and fauna. Documentation of casualties of eagles is easy to find, with numbers ranging in the thousands, depending on the source of the data. If in doubt, Google “videos of raptors being struck by wind turbines.”

Second, consider that available statistics regarding “incidental takings” are compiled by the wind companies themselves, using company- paid personnel, and then, under only voluntary guidelines provided by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, making the data automatically suspect. These mortality counts are generally made only at select sites chosen by the wind company; will not count injured birds which will eventually die, and may be made irregularly, at intervals of 30 to 90 days, allowing time for

predators to feed on or remove carcasses. Consider also, the ground area defined in taking a census of dead birds, is intentionally undersize. For a 426 ft. tall turbine with a rotor length of 164 ft., a count would be taken within an area of 164 ft., exactly the length of a rotor blade, although 75 to 80% of dead birds found were in an area of 655 ft. of the tower. And remember that the Invenergy turbines will be 600 ft. tall with a proportionately wider kill zone. Naturally, the smaller area examined strengthens the wind company's claim of a much smaller impact on bird populations. Incredibly, USFWS guidelines do not require wind companies to share this data with the public. And thus far, only raptors have been discussed. Consider the further effects on other bird species and bats, losses of which are estimated in the millions annually, and the effect of their loss on insect populations

Third, the concept of our federal government, through studies and rule making funded by our tax dollars to authorize the incidental killing of eagles by a for-profit industry (also subsidized by us), falls somewhere between hypocritical and outright insanity. Those of you who consider yourselves environmentalists, where are you now? Where is your voice on this matter?

Several decades ago, after learning the effects of DDT on the eagle population, and its near demise, our federal government did a commendable job of bringing these creatures back from the brink of extinction. They are not out of the woods yet, nor should their continued existence ever be considered guaranteed. Yet, the same government is willing to ignore fifty years of progress in the name of wind energy. There is an even bigger issue at stake; one which outweighs clean energy and eagles both: If self-serving political and commercial interests have so little conscience that they would sacrifice our national symbol, then what does this imply for our way of life, our constitutionally granted freedoms, and our society as a whole?

It is well-known among those of us who revere and stay in touch with the natural world around us, that there are numerous eagle nesting sites in the backwoods of our local area. Very early one recent morning, traveling the River Rd. near Adrian, I was astounded to see a gathering of not a couple, but ten, count them, ten eagles, perched and overflying the Canisteo River. Not since Alaska had I seen the likes. The only possible adjective is breathtaking. This is their home by choice, given the region's livability, and ours too. Let's keep it that way.

James Koegel, Canisteo

References:

*From the Associated Press, December 14, 2016, "Final Wind-Turbine Rule Permits Thousands of Eagle Deaths, Matthew Daly

American Eagle Foundation: "Conventional Wind Energy- A Design Deadly for Birds"

CFACT.org: "Wind Turbines Kill Up To 39 Million Birds a Year"; CFACT Insights; Jim Weigand; March 18, 2013