

Letter to the editor sent to the Herald Gazette and Free Press

August 10, 2010

RE: Ragged Mountain Wind Power Development

Dear Editor:

It has come to the attention of several property owners and concerned citizens in the Camden/Rockport/ Hope and other neighborhoods on or near the Snow Bowl and Penobscot Bay, that plans are underway to develop wind power on Ragged Mountain.

As a community of laypersons, we have begun to educate ourselves about the potential advantages and disadvantages of this development. We assume we all share a common goal of wanting to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. We are trying to balance the advantages and disadvantages of the project, as we understand it so far.

Advantages:

- a positive symbolic move by a Maine community to move toward renewable energy sources
- possibly cheaper power for those served by the wind turbines

Disadvantages:

- environmental degradation by the industrialization of Ragged Mountain (including ridgeline blasting and construction, road construction, and power line construction)
- visual degradation of the Ragged Mountain skyline, the gateway to the Midcoast and where the mountains first meet the sea
- physical damage to the ridgeline of Ragged Mountain
- unknown impact on birds, bats, and wildlife
- significant audible impact to the whole bowl of the Hosmer Pond watershed

Ragged Mountain is a treasured recreational area, enjoyed and valued by all Camden citizens and beloved by the residents of the Hosmer Pond watershed. Such groups as the Hosmer Pond Association, the Coastal Mountains Land Trust, the Camden Snow Bowl and its assorted supporters such as the Ragged Mountain Foundation, the Ragged Mountain Ski and Snowboard Club (RMSSC), and the Midcoast New England Mountain Bike Association (McNEMBA) all have a stake in this matter.

How have these groups responded to the plans to develop the mountain into an industrialized wind power project? The excellent plans by the Ragged Mountain Redevelopment Committee seem to be finely tuned. How will the potentially renovated Snow Bowl be affected by changes to the mountain?

The disadvantages of wind power on Ragged Mountain in the long and short term far outweigh the advantages.

1. To quote the Energy Committee's minutes of June 1, 2009: "In order to site turbines, so that they don't create a problem, the minimum distance to the nearest house is about 1,000 feet and that will even cause a little bit of concern. Within 1,000 feet, the noise is too much for neighbors."

Whose homes are nearest? What is meant by "a little bit of concern"? What is meant by "the noise is too much for the neighbors"? Will homeowners in the Hosmer Pond watershed be affected, as neighbors of the Fox Island turbines have been? How will property values be affected?

2. To quote the Energy Committee's minutes of June 1, 2009: "There are some concerns with flicker. This occurs when the sun shines directly on you through the turbine which causes a strobe affect."

Who would want to celebrate an event at the Lodge, hike or ski with turbine noise and flickering strobe effects? Wind turbines blades also kill birds, bats, scare away wildlife, and scatter ice.

3. To quote the Energy Committee's minutes of June 1, 2009: "Constructing turbines on this site will be difficult. You will need to build a road to reach the site. The turbines come in about seven different parts with three blades, three sections to the tower and the base hold that sits on the top. Those are extraordinarily heavy weighing about 100,000 pounds. The trucks that carry them are quite large. You also need roads to interconnect all the turbines. You can narrow the road with time if you choose to only allow service vehicles and widen it at some point should you have to take them out or replace them. There will be a road and the character of the ridgeline with change significantly in some people's minds.

In addition to blasting multiple sites along the Ragged Mountain ridgeline down to the bedrock for the turbine foundations, the double-lane or wider access and connecting roads would affect the mountain drainage and could potentially disrupt the underground aquifers. Many households in Camden, Rockport and Hope and the Snow Bowl itself depend upon the Ragged Mountain watershed for our water supply. In addition, curves in the road would require more than double width roads, and where would transmission lines and transformers be located?

We on Ragged Mountain and the surrounding areas are faced with permanent disruption to our lives caused by the blasting of the mountain, construction of the access roads that will also require winter plowing, incessant turbine noise, flashing strobe light flicker, new mountain drainage characteristics, possible changes to our water supply, loss of recreational and tourism potential, loss of habitat for animal life and a potential reduction in recreational enjoyment of the potentially renovated Snow Bowl. We may also be subject to suffering health issues and a loss of property value.

We are also concerned that, with the "fast track" status of wind power projects, that there will be little opportunity for citizen input to affect the plans.

Dear citizens of Camden, Rockport and Hope, there are and will be better ways to “go green” than permanently destroying what we have inherited in Ragged Mountain. Maine has a wealth of resources, including water. We encourage you to consider the alternatives before causing irreparable changes to one of Camden’s seven famous mountains, Ragged Mountain.

Respectfully submitted,

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