



MEMO

To: Board of Trustees, VOF

From: Martha Little, VOF Deputy Director

Date: 3/17/2016

Re: Renewable Energy Projects in Virginia—Rocky Forge Wind Project

VOF was recently made aware of a project to construct wind turbines in Botetourt County. This project, entitled Rocky Forge Wind Project will provide energy up to 75 MW to serve up to 20,000 homes. The turbines will be spaced approximately ¼ mile apart and may be as tall as 550 feet from the base to tip.

Based on the information that VOF has found, the project will not intersect any VOF easements. The project is located within the Buffalo Creek-Purgatory Mountain Special Project Area and the closest VOF easements are 1.8 miles (Hundley in Botetourt and co-held with Blue Ridge Land Conservancy) and 3.3 miles (Showalter in Rockbridge) (see attached map).

VOF did not receive any notice of this project or a request for comments from the state coordinated review process. Because of this, I contacted DEQ to learn more about the process for these types of projects. DEQ has developed a special process for wind and solar projects, entitled Wind Permit by Rule Regulation and Guidance and Solar Permit by Rule and Guidance. For wind projects, the regulation contains requirements for wind-powered electric generation projects consisting of wind turbines and associated facilities with a single interconnection to the electrical grid that are designed for, or capable of, operation at a rated capacity equal to or less than 100 megawatts.

The DEQ has determined that a permit by rule is required for small wind energy projects with a rated capacity greater than five megawatts and this regulation contains the permit by rule provisions for these projects in Part II ([9VAC15-40-30](#) et seq.) of the Code. The DEQ has also determined that a permit by rule is not required for small wind energy projects with a rated capacity of five megawatts or less and this regulation contains notification and other provisions for these projects in Part III ([9VAC15-40-130](#)) of the Code. Projects that meet the criteria in Part III of this section are deemed to be covered by the permit by rule. The Wind PBR Guidance addresses pre-construction natural resource analyses, mitigation plans, post-construction monitoring, and other PBR requirements and issues.

A requirement of the application for a Permit by Rule includes an analysis of the beneficial and adverse impacts on natural and cultural resources. DEQ in consultation with the other agencies within the Secretariat of Natural Resources has 90 days to determine the adequacy and completeness of the application. Both the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Department of Historic Resources conduct comprehensive assessments of the impacts to

wildlife and historic resources. DGIF has conducted a yearlong study of this project and has been working with the company, APEX to avoid and mitigate impacts to wildlife resources.

The project has received approval from the County Board of Supervisors and attached is a letter of support from Molly Ward, Secretary of Natural Resources. DEQ is aware of several more solar and wind projects that are being proposed for Virginia in the near future.

BOS approval article:

http://www.roanoke.com/community/botetourt_view/botetourt-supervisors-ok-permits-for-rocky-forge-wind-farm/article_b80947f0-a77b-56ed-ae71-a7cf67abcacb.html#facebook-comments

PC approval article:

http://www.roanoke.com/community/botetourt_view/botetourt-county-planning-commission-oks-permits-for-rocky-forge-wind/article_2cee8aa9-a313-597a-8bf6-52aec2c0589f.html

Rockbridge County BOS opinion:

<https://vof.box.com/s/26sarrj5o14ofl6birx140nsyrzkfq7e>



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Molly Joseph Ward
Secretary of Natural Resources

January 21, 2016

The Honorable Donald M. Scothorn, Chair
Botetourt County Board of Supervisors
1 West Main Street
Fincastle, Virginia 24090

Dear Chairman Scothorn and Members of the Board:

I am writing in support of Apex Clean Energy's application for permit and a special exception permit for Rocky Forge wind farm.

If approved, this site would be home to the first wind farm in Virginia and would mark a huge step towards the Commonwealth's renewable energy goals. Additionally, Jerry Fraley is currently in discussion with the U.S. Forest Service and Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to preserve his 9,800 acre property in perpetuity. This conservation easement would be the second largest in the state, a considerable accomplishment in its own right.

I have personally visited the proposed site and met with Mr. Fraley. Having toured his property, I can attest to both its beauty and ecological significance. We are grateful for Mr. Fraley's vision, his devotion to his land, and his commitment to stewardship.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Molly Ward".

Molly Joseph Ward