Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY LOAN GUARANTEE TO RECORD HILL, LLC FOR THE RECORD HILL WIND PROJECT IN ROXBURY, MAINE

AGENCY: U.S. Department of Energy, Loan Programs Office

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact

SUMMARY: The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) that analyzed the reasonably foreseeable environmental impacts associated with the nominal 50.6 megawatt (MW) wind power project and associated interconnection transmission line proposed by Record Hill, LLC (Record Hill) for the Record Hill Wind Project (Project) in Oxford County, Maine. DOE, through its Loan Programs Office (LPO), proposes to provide a $102 million federal loan guarantee pursuant to Title XVII of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPAct 2005) to Record Hill to support the construction and startup of the proposed Project. The purpose and need for agency action is to comply with DOE's mandate under EPAct 2005 by selecting eligible projects that meet the goals of the Act. DOE is using the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to assist in determining whether to issue a loan guarantee to Record Hill to support the proposed project.

The proposed project would utilize Siemens SWT-2.3-93 wind turbines and associated electrical interconnection infrastructure located along approximately 3.5 miles of ridgeline. Turbine Load Control technology would be utilized to increase the productivity of the wind farm by reducing the amount of curtailment (turbine shut downs) in this region where trees and other objects that increase turbulence are present. The decrease in curtailment results in an increase of annual energy production when compared to other commercial technologies in the United States that need to stop generating electricity in certain wind conditions where the loads on the wind turbine exceed their design limits.

Power generated by the turbine array would be collected by two 34.5-kilovolt (kV) lines and carried approximately 2.9 miles southeast to a 20,700 square foot project collector substation. There the voltage would be increased to 115 kV and then transferred to an adjacent Central Maine Power system. The site of the project collector substation also would include a project office located in an existing 2,700 square foot home and a proposed 7,200-square foot project Operations and Maintenance building. The total nameplate capacity of the project would be 50.6 MW.

All discussion and analysis related to the potential impacts of construction and operation of the proposed Project is contained in the Final EA (DOE/EA-1824), which is incorporated here by reference. DOE examined potential impacts on biological, physical, and sociocultural resources and found none to be significant. In addition, impacts related to intentional destructive acts and cumulative effects, including global climate change, were analyzed and found to not be significant.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE EA PROCESS: In accordance with applicable requirements, DOE sent a notification letter regarding its determination to prepare an EA to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection on August 11, 2010. The letter described the proposed action and stated that the Draft EA would be sent to the state for review. On February 15, 2011 DOE sent the Draft EA, and solicited comments from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. The Draft EA was also posted on the Loan Programs Office website and a notice of availability was published in the *Rumford Falls Times*.

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DOE received a formal request for an extension to the 30-day comment period from a member of the Roxbury Town Board. On March 10, 2011, DOE subsequently extended the end of the public comment period from the original date of March 16, 2011 to April 1, 2011. The Notice of Extension was announced in the *Rumford Falls Times* and on the Loan Programs Office website. In all, DOE received 35 comment documents totaling 167 individual comments during the comment response period. The Final EA includes an appendix with all of the comments and DOE's responses, including an indication of whether DOE modifications to the EA text were necessary.

The comments expressed concerns regarding impacts on wildlife and water resources, effects of noise and visual disturbances, as well as socioeconomic and cumulative impacts. DOE used the environmental review contained in the Final EA to assess and document the significance of the impacts associated with the proposed action as defined at 40 CFR Part 1508.27. Based on this review, the comments did not support a conclusion that any of the resource areas affected would experience a significant adverse impact.

DETERMINATION: On the basis of the Final EA, DOE has determined that providing a Federal loan guarantee to Record Hill for construction and startup of the 50.6-MW wind power project and its associated transmission line in Oxford County, Maine, will not have a significant effect on the human environment. The preparation of an environmental impact statement is therefore not required, and DOE is issuing this Finding of No Significant Impact.

Copies of the Final EA are available at the DOE Loan Programs Office website at http://www.lgprogram.energy.gov/NEPA_EA.html or from

Joe Marhamati
NEPA Document Manager
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave, SW
Suite 4B-196 LP-10
Washington, DC 20585
Joseph.Marhamati@hq.doe.gov

Additional information on the DOE NEPA process is available from:

Carol M. Borgstrom, Director
Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance (GC-54)
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585
202-586-4600 or 1-800-472-2756

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Jonathan M. Silver
Executive Director, Office of Loan Programs