

**STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD**

Petition of Georgia Mountain Community Wind,)
LLC for a Certificate of Public Good, pursuant)
to 30 V.S.A. § 248, authorizing the construction)
and operation of a 5 wind turbine electric)
generation facility with associated electric)
collection and interconnection facilities on)
Georgia Mountain, in the Towns of Milton and)
Georgia, Vermont, to be known as the “Georgia)
Mountain Community Wind Project”)

Docket No. _____

**PREFILED TESTIMONY OF
ROSALIND B. RENFREW, Ph.D.**

**ON BEHALF OF
GEORGIA MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY WIND, LLC**

March 26, 2009

Ms. Renfrew’s testimony introduces her report, which provides a breeding bird inventory and assessment of the potential impacts of the Georgia Mountain Community Wind Project upon breeding birds.

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1 **1. Introduction**

2 Q1. Please state your name and business address.

3 A1. My name is Rosalind B. Renfrew, Ph.D. My business address is: Vermont Center
4 for Ecostudies, P.O. Box 420, Norwich, Vermont 05055.

5

6 Q2. By whom are you employed and in what position?

7 A2. I am employed by the Vermont Center for Ecostudies as a Conservation Biologist.

8

9 Q3. Please describe your educational background and work experience.

10 A3. My resumé is attached as Exhibit Petitioner RBR-1.

11

1 **2. Summary of Assessment and Conclusion**

2 Q4. What is the purpose of your testimony?

3 A4. Steven D. Faccio, also with the Vermont Center for Ecostudies, and I were
4 retained by the Vermont Environmental Research Associates to conduct a
5 breeding bird inventory and prepare an assessment of the proposed Georgia
6 Mountain Community Wind Project upon breeding birds. A copy of our report is
7 included as Exhibit Petitioner RBR-2.

8
9 Q5. Please summarize your findings and conclusions regarding the Project's potential
10 impacts upon breeding birds.

11 A5. We conducted a breeding bird inventory and evaluated the potential impacts of
12 the proposed Georgia Mountain Community Wind Project on the breeding bird
13 community. This Project is a 3 to 5 wind turbine generation project. A detailed
14 description of the Project is included in the prefiled testimony of John
15 Zimmerman. Our report provides the findings and interpretations from a field
16 season before construction, evaluating the potential impacts on breeding birds.
17 Field studies were conducted during June of 2008. We also make
18 recommendations to minimize impacts if the Project moves forward. Our
19 objectives were to (1) document any state or federally endangered or threatened
20 species, or species of concern; (2) determine species composition, richness, and
21 abundance on the site; and (3) determine whether a more rigorous assessment is
22 necessary before construction is initiated.

1
2 We carried out a combination of transect and point count surveys to obtain
3 breeding bird species diversity, relative abundance, and evenness within the
4 Georgia Mountain study area. Point counts were established along the $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile
5 ridgeline where turbine locations are proposed, and transects were established
6 along the proposed access road and transmission line corridor. A total of 15 point
7 counts were conducted at 11 survey points during 2 separate visits - 4 points were
8 sampled on both visits.

9
10 At the proposed site, avian species diversity and density paralleled that of other
11 forested regions in the state. We detected a total of 36 bird species during field
12 work. Twenty-six species were detected at point counts, and 10 during transect
13 surveys or between point count stations. Six species commonly associated with
14 northern hardwood forests (Red-eyed Vireo, Veery, Ovenbird, Black-throated
15 Blue Warbler, Eastern Wood Pewee, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak) comprised
16 52% of the 141 individuals detected during point counts. Most of the species
17 detected on point count surveys nest primarily in mature forest habitat, and 15%
18 of those detected were edge species.

19
20 We found a singing male Cerulean Warbler, a species of Special Concern in
21 Vermont, along the proposed access road near the existing cell tower road. On
22 transects and point counts, we detected nine species with a conservation concern
23 status (Bird Conservation Region status and/or Vermont Species of Greatest

1 Conservation Need) including a pair of soaring Red-shouldered Hawks. We did
2 not find federal or Vermont endangered or threatened species in the study area.
3 Because the elevation at Georgia Mountain reaches only 1440ft., it does not
4 harbor montane spruce-fir habitat that would support Bicknell's Thrush (listed as
5 Special Concern in VT) or other species of that habitat guild.

6
7 Habitat loss and fragmentation is a potential concern for any proposed wind
8 power facility. However, the long-term impact of this proposed wind facility on
9 breeding birds due to fragmentation is likely to be relatively low because: (1) the
10 forest on the proposed site is already moderately fragmented due to the cell tower
11 and access road, logging activities, and ATV trails; and (2) significant portions of
12 the proposed access road and transmission line follow existing roads and trails.

13
14 The project poses a low risk of collision to raptors outside of migration season.
15 Raptors documented breeding or hunting at or near the site occur at low densities.

16
17 Q6. What recommendations, if any, do you have concerning this Project regarding the
18 breeding bird community?

19 A6. Although impacts of the proposed project to the breeding bird community are
20 expected to be low, we recommend measures be taken to minimize them.
21 Specifically, we recommend that temporarily disturbed areas be reclaimed where
22 possible, and that infrastructure be sited on areas already disturbed or developed

1 whenever possible. We do not believe that additional study is needed pre-
2 construction to evaluate impacts on the local breeding bird community.

3

4 Q7. Does this conclude your testimony at this time?

5 A7. Yes, it does.