

STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD

PSB Docket No. 7628

Joint Petition of Green Mountain Power Corporation,
Vermont Electric Cooperative, Inc., and Vermont
Electric Power Company, Inc. for a Certificate of
Public Good pursuant to 30 V.S.A. Section 248 to
Construct up to a 63 MW Wind Electric Generation
Facility and associated Facilities on Lowell Mountain
In Lowell, Vermont and the Installation of approximately
16.9 miles of Transmission Line and associated
Substations in Lowell, Westfield, and Jay, Vermont.

**Prefiled Surrebuttal Testimony of
John Buck**

On Behalf of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources

Summary of Testimony

Mr. Buck is a wildlife biologist for the Department of Fish and Wildlife. The purpose of Mr. Buck's testimony is to provide a response to the Rebuttal Testimony of Mr. Raphael and Mr. Wallin.

1 **Q1. Please state your name, place of employment, and your position?**

2 A1. John Buck. I am a wildlife biologist with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

3

4 **Q2. Are you the same John Buck that provided direct testimony in this matter on or**
5 **about October 22, 2010?**

6 A2. Yes

7

8 **Q3. Have you reviewed the prefiled testimony of Petitioners?**

9 A3. I have reviewed the prefiled testimony of Mr. David Raphael and Mr. Wallin

10

11 **Q4. What is the purpose of your testimony?**

12 A4. The primary purpose of my testimony is to further clarify the significant difference
13 between Mr. Raphael's assessment of impact to the remote outdoor experience and mine.

14

15 **Q5. After reviewing Mr. Raphael's testimony, did he address or allay your concerns**
16 **about the impacts of the project on the Wild Branch WMA?**

17 A5. No. Mr. Raphael assesses impact to the remote outdoor experience based simply on one's
18 ability to see the turbines from the vantage point of one's car. The many users of the
19 WMA arrive to the property by vehicle because it is such a long distance from developed
20 locations. However, once on site they park their vehicles and enjoy the solitude of the
21 remoteness on foot. Off-road vehicles are not permitted on the Wild Branch WMA. In
22 fact hunters, hikers, anglers, and other wildlife enthusiasts would prefer to move by foot
23 as it is the best way to travel about the property in a discrete, free, and independent
24 fashion. By using the property in this way, recreationists have the greatest probability of

1 fulfilling their various wildlife-based goals. This will take them to multiple vantage
2 points where the profound human influence of industrial turbine presence will
3 significantly alter the remote outdoor experience.

4
5 **Q6. Where are the areas of greatest impact from the project?**

6
7 A6. Based on the proximity of the proposed southern most extension of the turbine string,
8 people using the north east quadrant of the Wild Branch WMA would experience the
9 greatest brunt of the development. However, everyone approaching the WMA from the
10 north will see and hear the turbines for some distance. This impression will impact their
11 entire remote outdoor experience anywhere on the WMA.

12
13 **Q7. Please provide a response to the basis for Mr. Raphael's opinion that he does not**
14 **believe that the views of the turbines "will rise to the level of undue, nor affect the**
15 **recreational activity or ambience of these areas."**

16
17 A7. I would reiterate the inadequacy of an evaluation that only considers the visual impact to
18 the resource. To my knowledge the WMA has not been designated as a scenic resource,
19 but not because it isn't scenic. To have remote qualities the public finds enjoyable
20 requires the experience be removed from human infrastructure. Scenic qualities could
21 serve to supplement the experience but do not define it. Much like the summit of Mt.
22 Mansfield has great scenic quality but, due to the intense human presence of roads,
23 towers, and visitors, it is not a remote place. It is a very one dimensional assumption to
24 view hunting and fishing as being only about the harvesting of animals. Remoteness is a
25 quality that plays a very important role in the hunting, fishing, and viewing experience in
26 Vermont. Most hunters, anglers, and photographers (viewer) do not harvest game or fish
27 or obtain a good photograph with every outing. But, they continue to hunt, fish, and
28 photograph because of the richness that other qualities such as sights, sounds, smells, and
29 remoteness bring to the experience.

30
31 Petitioner attempts to minimize the impacts to the use and experience at the WMA by
32 suggesting that modifications to current forest management practices could be utilized to

1 shield the view of the turbine string. Petitioner contends that additional vegetative
2 growth would distract a visitor from the larger impacts to the remote experience at the
3 Wild Branch WMA. Petitioner has the burden of reducing the impacts of the project, not
4 the Agency. The forest management practices at the WMA must serve the purposes of
5 the WMA. The WMA was purchased and is managed for two very important purposes
6 that are not valued as one greater than the other. Wildlife management areas serve as a
7 public resource that provides both, habitat for birds and mammals to thrive and
8 propagate, and for the people of Vermont to use for their recreational enjoyment.

9
10 **Q8. Mr. Wallin in his rebuttal testimony suggests that you testified that “the forest**
11 **canopy is deliberately fragmented within this WMA for maintaining open meadows,**
12 **an early successional habitat.” What is your response?**

13
14 A8. The Department has created layers of habitat by developing strata of age classes and seral
15 stages of native vegetation within the forest. The staggered results are temporary due to
16 the constant growth of the forest community. The small grassy openings mimic that
17 which might be created by natural events. They are less than an acre in size and do not
18 alter the dominant vegetation type, nor do they pose a significant barrier to the movement
19 of forest dwelling species. Also, these openings do not have permanent gravel and
20 concrete structures and could easily revert to forest if that was determined to be a greater
21 benefit to wildlife. Furthermore, they are treated by maintenance personnel at intervals
22 of 3 years or greater. This is in stark contrast to the wind farm proposal where the road
23 will fragment the landscape for the life of the project and beyond under the current
24 decommissioning plan.

25 **Q9. Does this conclude your testimony?**

26 A9. Yes it does.