

Progress Report on the Ad Hoc Committee on the Hatchet Ridge Wind Project

The Ad Hoc Committee on the Hatchet Ridge Wind project, comprised of Bill Oliver, Red Modeen and Claudia Yerion with have been diligently working for the protection of birds and bats that are predicted to be significantly impacted by the proposed Hatchet Wind project.

Wintu members Rob Santry and Kenneth Able have provided assistance to the committee as well, with Ken providing an in-depth analysis of the nocturnal Radar study.

The EIR and Report to the Planning Commission (including additional permit conditions) are available for viewing online at The Shasta County Website under Dept. of Resource Management:

<http://www.co.shasta.ca.us/Departments/Resourcecmgmt/drm/Hatchet%20Ridge/Hatchet%20Ridge.htm>

In response to the determination of the draft EIR that the project was predicted to have a “Significant and Unavoidable Impact” to birds, Wintu got involved, engaging in numerous discussions of our concerns with RES, Babcock and Brown, California Dept. of Fish and Game, USFWS, and Audubon California.

Dan Taylor, Policy Director for Audubon California participated in these discussions as well and his presence at these meetings conveyed the additional authority of Audubon California. Dan’s support and participation was invaluable to our role in this process.

Our local office of the CA Dept. of Fish and Game stepped up and advocated along with us for mitigations to address these impacts, and have been instrumental in helping to achieve precedent-setting Compensatory Mitigation.

Although Wintu was not able to reach consensus with the project applicant RES and their partners on all of the issues, the result was a revised BIO-6 section of the Final EIR which better addressed more of the issues and impacts the project is predicted to have.

Wintu’s final position on this project is this: we are not supporting, nor are we actively opposing the project.

We decided that we can be much more effective by participating in an ongoing dialogue with the agencies and parties involved, continuing to advocate for appropriate measures and mitigations.

Although the impacts are still classified as ‘Significant and Unavoidable’, which will likely cause significant mortality to birds, including State Fully Protected Species such as Bald Eagle and Greater Sandhill Crane, this project is setting precedents in its mitigation requirements given the level of predicted impacts. This will push the Wind industry to provide higher levels of mitigations and avian studies and monitoring for future wind development in the California.

This project is one of the first in the State to utilize ‘The California Energy Commission’s Guidelines for Reducing Impacts to Birds and Bats from Wind Energy Development’. This document provided much needed guidance and a template for all parties to address the issues involved. Wintu was instrumental in pushing for their extensive use.

-We are particularly pleased with the compensatory mitigation for Greater Sandhill Crane for the acquisition of breeding habitat in the region. This is the first wind project where CDFG has successfully reached an agreement with a project applicant to require this type of compensatory mitigation.

-Also of great value is the establishment of a Technical Advisory Committee as a mechanism to respond to mortality issues and responses as they arise during project operations. The committee requires that an environmental organization that advocates for protections to birds be invited to participate, and it is likely that we will be asked to do so.

This is also the first such TAC to include an environmental organization.

We are still in ongoing discussions with Shasta County, RES and DFG to address issues which we feel were overlooked or not adequately addressed.

Dan Taylor of Audubon California, although supportive and invaluable throughout this process, made it clear that it was up to us to decide on our approach in the process and our final position on the project. He has been very appreciative and positive regarding our work and involvement on this issue and believes that our final position on the project and our continuing role is consistent with the mission of Audubon.