



Shaping the future for birds

Thomas V. Mike Miller
President of the Senate
Maryland State House, H-107
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

March 27, 2014

Dear Senator Miller:

I am writing to express the American Bird Conservancy's (ABC's) concerns about the proposed Great Bay wind energy project in Somerset County, MD. We are aware that the Maryland Senate will be considering HB 1168, a bill that would delay possible approval of the Great Bay project for up to 13 months to allow a more detailed analysis of the environmental and economic impacts of this proposed project. We strongly support this proposed action, even if it results in cancellation of the project by the developer.

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) is a 501(c) (3) not-for-profit membership organization whose mission is to conserve native birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. ABC acts by safeguarding the rarest species, conserving and restoring habitats, and reducing threats, while building capacity in the bird conservation movement.

As you may know, ABC wrote a letter to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) expressing our concerns about the potential environmental impact of this project and outlined what needed to be done to ensure that this project would also not have a significant negative impact on Maryland's public trust resources, including threatened and endangered species, Bald Eagles, and migratory birds (see attached scoping letter and press release), all of which are protected by state and federal law. Those concerns still remain, and when combined with the potential negative economic impact to the region and state, we believe the Maryland House and Senate are right to be putting the brakes on the current irresponsibly sited wind energy facility. ABC supports responsible wind energy development, but only if it is Bird Smart ©. Bird smart wind energy development is primarily about appropriate risk assessment during siting and the location of this facility in close proximity to Chesapeake Bay and height of the proposed turbines (600 feet) could be a deadly combination for birds. A recent peer-reviewed study indicated that taller turbines, such as those proposed for Somerset County, pose more of a danger to birds.

Of particular concern to ABC and its Maryland members is the project's potential impact on Bald Eagles, our national symbol and an emotional favorite of the American public. The proposed site is within 10 miles of 30 active Bald Eagle nests. If this project is built to current projections, it may be the single most deadly project for Bald Eagles in the Americas, perhaps the world. With this species recently coming off the endangered species list, it would be a shame to see the trend move in the opposite direction, especially given the hundreds of thousands of hours and millions of dollars spent in recovery. The FWS and developers apparently think that the project can be operated at no net loss to the Bald Eagle population, but they have offered no scientifically-credible evidence to support this conclusion. The projections are based on untested models, which essentially amounts to an experiment with the future of our public trust resources at stake. ABC believes there are plenty of other locations that could be



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considered for this project, especially on already-developed farm land, a greater distance away from the environmentally sensitive Chesapeake Bay.

ABC strongly encourages passage of this bill so that a thorough and transparent evaluation of the potential impacts of this proposed project—both economic and environmental-- can be properly conducted, rather than rushing to conclusion. ABC and its experts will be watching the process carefully. Please don't hesitate to call on us if you feel that an expert opinion is needed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Hutchins, Ph.D.
National Coordinator, Bird Smart Wind Energy Campaign

Cc: Governor Martin O'Malley