

Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society

Dr. Brian M. Wargo
President

Mrs. Debbie Bodenschatz
Secretary



Dr. Jeff Payne
Vice-President

Mr. John Julian
Treasurer

Statement of Concern

Proposed Wind Turbines in the Wild Creek Watershed via the Bethlehem Authority property in Penn Forest Township, Carbon County, Pennsylvania

The Allegheny Front Hawk Watch is managed by the Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society with the mission of engaging in scientific and education pursuits. For nearly 30 years, our volunteers have collected hawk migration data, making the Allegheny Front one of the iconic hawk migration sites in the United States. Each year, thousands of guests from all around the world, make travel plans to partake in the spring and fall migration counts. The main draw is the Eastern Golden Eagle, the faster, more lethal cousin of the Bald Eagle. This elusive and almost mystical bird has strength and speed unequalled in raptors—having been known to take young deer and even bear cubs, and yet is stealthy enough to reach nearly 200 miles per hour.

Little was known about Eastern Golden Eagles, but thanks to the research conducted at the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch, more details are being gleaned each year. One fact is clear though—the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch is the premier hawk site for Golden Eagles in the Eastern Flyway. The Allegheny Front Hawk Watch holds the single day record of 74 Golden Eagles, the fall migration record of 320 Golden Eagles, and the year-end record of 386 detected Golden Eagles. With an estimated population of no more than 5000 Golden Eagles in the Eastern Flyway, a significant percentage of the total population are passing the narrow escarpment of the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch.

During their fall migration, Golden Eagles primarily migrate south from late September through late December, almost exclusively following the Appalachian Mountains. This elusive species rarely shows up in Pennsylvania nesting surveys or the Christmas Bird Count, but is clearly present. In the spring, they turn around and begin heading north, passing again from mid-February into mid-April, directly in line with the proposed wind turbine project for the Wild Creek Watershed via the Bethlehem Authority property in Penn Forest Township, Carbon County, Pennsylvania.

As a reminder, federal laws including The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, The Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and The Lacey Act, makes it illegal to kill Bald and Golden Eagles as well as other migrating avian species. The California wind industry made the mistake of building first and then trying to determine a solution to mitigate Western Golden Eagle impact strikes, resulting in major overrun costs, periodic shutdowns, and in some cases, disassembly. For just these reasons, we are in opposition to the industrial wind turbine project.

When we consider the impact this project may have on the passerines, raptors, and to the flora and fauna in the ecological superhighway called the Appalachian Mountains, let alone the scarring of the land, the

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depreciation of property close to the turbines, and the inevitable social turmoil of converting vast forestland to industrialization, we are deeply concerned.

The Allegheny Front Hawk Watch, The Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society, and the Hawk Migration Association of North America are not against wind power, but understand that siting is the crucial piece in determining the viability of wind turbines for the local community. Most of us understand that wind power is an industrial process, not an environmental panacea. Locals lose their land, the land loses its native plant and animal species, gains invasive species, and the community becomes divided. Money is surely to be made with this project, but it is always for the large corporations, while the original tenders of the land must bear the true cost.

We ask that community members act as stewards of the land and not fall for boom-and-bust industries, that make promises, but online searches shows they do not keep. We remember the Gamesa Wind debacle, which cost everyone years of fighting, stress, and sleepless nights. The Allegheny Front is becoming an engine of the economy, not from industry, but from the thousands of tourists who visit us each year. We feel this is a viable model for the entire Appalachian Mountain region.

Sincerely,

Brian M. Wargo

Brian M. Wargo, Ph.D., President
Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society

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