



Nebraska Wind Energy and Wildlife News

December 17, 2013

[Eagle Permits; Changes in the Regulations Governing Eagle Permitting](#). On December 9, 2013, the USFWS revised the regulations for permits for take of golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) and bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) that is associated with, but not the purpose of, an activity. They extended the maximum term for programmatic permits to 30 years, while maintaining discretion to issue permits of shorter duration as appropriate. (<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/12/09/2013-29088/eagle-permits-changes-in-the-regulations-governing-eagle-permitting>).

Around Nebraska...

[Nebraska Wind Farms - Gaining Momentum](#). The state of Nebraska is sitting on a goldmine of wind energy, but currently the state lags far behind its neighbors. However, wind-farms are popping up much quicker than ever before. This past year the state had 459 mega-watts of wind energy on its system. (<http://www.nebraska.tv/story/24165748/nebraska-wind-farms-gaining-momentum>).

Around the Nation & World...

[Wind and Wildlife](#)

[Eagles and Wind Energy](#)

[FOR WIND POWER, US EXTENDS PERMIT FOR EAGLE DEATHS](#). The Obama administration will allow companies to seek authorization to kill and harm bald and golden eagles for up to 30 years without penalty in an effort to balance some of the environmental trade-offs of green energy. (<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/govt-extend-authorizations-eagle-deaths>).

[U.S. Regulators Extend Duration Of Eagle Take Permits, Up The Price](#). The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) have [announced](#) rule changes related to eagle take permits. The revised regulations extend the permit tenure, significantly increase fees and allow permits to be transferable to new owners of projects. (http://www.nawindpower.com/e107_plugins/content/content.php?content.12365).

[Blowback over wind farm eagle rule](#). Wildlife groups and the Senate GOP's top environmental lawmaker are both irate over a new Interior Department [rule](#) allowing 30-year permits for wind farms to accidentally kill or injure bald and golden eagles. The rule was to be [published](#) in Monday's Federal Register. (<http://www.politico.com/story/2013/12/interior-faces-blowback-over-eagle-permits-for-wind-farms-100846.html>).

[Osage Nation criticizes eagle-death rule change](#). The federal government's decision to allow companies to seek authorization to kill and harm golden and bald eagles without penalty has come under fire from the Osage Nation. (<http://nativetimes.com/index.php/news/wildlife/9352-osage-nation-criticizes-eagle-death-rule-change>).

[PCW Submits Eagle Conservation Plan For 3 GW Wind Farm](#). Power Co. of Wyoming LLC (PCW) has [announced](#) another development regarding the federal permitting of its massive Chokecherry and Sierra Madre (CCSM) Wind Energy Project, a 3 GW wind farm planned for southeastern Wyoming. The company says it is submitting a comprehensive eagle conservation plan, along with an application for a programmatic eagle permit, to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for environmental review and approval. (http://www.nawindpower.com/e107_plugins/content/content.php?content.12354).

[Other](#)

[Estimates of bird collision mortality at wind facilities in the contiguous United States](#). NEW study by Loss et al. We estimate that between 140,000 and 328,000 (mean = 234,000) birds are killed annually by collisions with monopole turbines in the contiguous U.S. We found support for an increase in mortality with increasing turbine hub height and support for differing mortality rates among regions, with per turbine mortality lowest in the Great Plains. Evaluation of risks to birds is warranted prior to continuing a widespread shift to taller wind turbines. Regional patterns of collision risk, while not obviating the need for species-specific and local-scale assessments, may inform broad-scale decisions about wind facility siting. (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0006320713003522>).

[Study Shows Newer Wind Turbines Still Killing Hundreds of Thousands of Birds](#). A new study shows that in spite of updated designs, U.S. wind turbines are killing hundreds of thousands of birds annually—a number that may balloon to about 1.4 million per year by 2030, when the ongoing industry expansion being encouraged by the federal government is expected to be fully implemented. (<http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/131210a.html>).

[Wind Power and Wildlife in Maine: A State-wide Geographic Analysis of High-Value Wildlife Resources and Wind Power Classes](#). This report analyzes, on a broad, state-wide scale, how much acreage in Maine has both wind and wildlife resource value, compared to how much acreage has wind without an overlapping natural resource value, in order to evaluate the potential for wind development that minimizes impacts to a broad array of wildlife habitat. (<http://maineaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Wind-Power-and-Wildlife-Full-Report.pdf#>).

[Maine environmental groups clash over wind power](#). A report by Maine Audubon that says turbines can be compatible with wildlife is attacked by other advocates. (http://www.pressherald.com/news/Friends_of_Maine_s_Mountains_challenges_Maine_Audubon_s_wind-energy_support_.html).

[A Struggle to Balance Wind Energy With Wildlife](#). As the Obama administration seeks to clear a path for more renewable energy projects, it has increasingly found itself caught between two staunch allies: the wind energy industry and environmental organizations.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/17/science/earth/a-struggle-to-balance-wind-energy-with-wildlife.html?hpw&rref=us&r=0>).

[How Many Birds Do Wind Turbines Really Kill?](#) One of the most commonly repeated criticisms of wind power is that it kills birds. The giant spinning turbines are basically bird death traps—and often they cut through prime flying space, making the carnage even worse. At least that's the story. But how many birds really do die? (<http://blogs.smithsonianmag.com/smartnews/2013/12/how-many-birds-do-wind-turbines-really-kill/>).

[Feds Step Up Avian Oversight: What The Wind Industry Needs To Know](#). Federal oversight of wind energy's adverse impacts to birds, bats and other wildlife will increase due to two recent developments: the pending first programmatic take permit under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) and the first criminal enforcement action for avian fatalities under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). (http://www.nawindpower.com/naw/e107_plugins/content/content.php?content.12400).

[Plans for £5.4bn Argyll Array offshore wind farm near Tiree dropped](#). Scottish Power Renewables (SPR) announced it would not proceed with the Argyll Array scheme following technical and environmental site studies. It would have had up to 300 turbines and a capacity of up to 1800MW, enough to power one million homes. SPR cited construction issues and "a significant presence" of basking sharks in the area for its decision. (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-business-25364699>).

[Bladeless Wind Turbine Too Good To Be True?](#) There's a video making the rounds this week showing a new wind turbine design that its developers claim will be more efficient, less resource-intensive, and safer for wildlife than conventional turbines. But do the claims stand up? (<http://www.kcet.org/news/rewire/wind/bladeless-wind-turbine-too-good-to-be-true.html>).

[Wind Farm Poses No Threat to Bighorn Sheep](#). A California wind-energy project will not threaten an endangered species of sheep, a federal judge ruled. (<http://www.courthousenews.com/2013/12/12/63687.htm>).

[The big picture: Western governors unveiling high-tech, satellite wildlife maps linking 16 states](#). Governors in 16 states unveiled a high-tech wildlife habitat mapping project Thursday that they hope will encourage economic development across the West while protecting the region's environmental treasures — an ambitious effort that's winning praise from conservationists and the energy industry. (http://trib.com/news/state-and-regional/the-big-picture-western-governors-unveiling-high-tech-satellite-wildlife/article_7b95cf0e-496e-51df-b324-2a5f929a2232.html).

[Oregon students, faculty using Mesalands turbines for research](#). A professor and two graduate students from Oregon State University are using the wind turbine generator at Mesalands Community College for research aimed at evaluating the potential impact on birds and bats that may collide with turbine blades. (<http://www.qcsunonline.com/2013/12/10/oregon-students-faculty-using-mesalands-turbines-for-research/>).

[Feds OK wildlife plan for Beech Ridge Energy's wind farm](#). Federal authorities have approved Beech Ridge Energy's plan to minimize the impact of its southern West Virginia wind farm on endangered bats and other wildlife. (<http://www.register-herald.com/todaysfrontpage/x602339286/Feds-OK-wildlife-plan-for-Beech-Ridge-Energy-s-wind-farm>).

['WingWhackers' app puts spotlight on conflict between birds and wind turbines](#). A [smartphone app](#) that's trying to raise awareness about conflicts between wind turbines and birds saw a spike in downloads after a settlement over eagle deaths at wind farms in Wyoming was announced last week. (<http://wyomingpublicmedia.org/post/wingwhackers-app-puts-spotlight-conflict-between-birds-and-wind-turbines>).

Wildlife

[Endangered status for bats urged again by scientists](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/endangered-status-for-bats-urged-again-by-scientists-1.2451359). Canadian scientists have issued a second appeal to Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government to protect bat populations being rapidly wiped out in the Maritimes. (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/endangered-status-for-bats-urged-again-by-scientists-1.2451359>).

[Climate Change Affects Ultrasonic Bat Signals For Better, Worse](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/climate-change-will-affect-ultrasonic-bat-signals/). Echolocation allows bats to stalk their insect and plant prey and also keeps them from flying into houses, trees, and telephone poles. But a changing climate could hamper the ability of some bat species to hunt effectively using sound, according to a new study. Evidence already suggests climate change may shift bats' geographic ranges and hibernation cycles. Now, alterations in the temperature of bat habitats could affect their echolocation abilities. (<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/climate-change-will-affect-ultrasonic-bat-signals/>).

[12-11-13 USFWS Proposes Special Rule under ESA Endorsing Landmark State Conservation Plan for Lesser Prairie-Chicken...](http://brianallmerradionetwork.wordpress.com/2013/12/11/12-11-13-usfws-proposes-special-rule-under-esa-endorsing-landmark-state-conservation-plan-for-lesser-prairie-chicken/) Would Exempt Agricultural Practices, Other Development Consistent with the Plan from Act's Restrictions if Species is Listed as Threatened. In light of a landmark conservation plan developed by the five range states of the lesser prairie-chicken, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today proposed a special rule that would provide regulatory certainty for landowners by exempting from regulation conservation actions and development undertaken in accordance with the plan, should the bird be listed under the Endangered Species Act. (<http://brianallmerradionetwork.wordpress.com/2013/12/11/12-11-13-usfws-proposes-special-rule-under-esa-endorsing-landmark-state-conservation-plan-for-lesser-prairie-chicken/>).

Wind

[Interior Department Proposes Offshore Wind Lease Sale to Advance President's Climate Action Plan, Identifies nearly 80,000 Acres off Maryland's Coast](http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/secretary-jewell-announces-milestone-for-commercial-wind-energy-development-in-federal-waters.cfm). As part of President Obama's [Climate Action Plan](#) to create American jobs, develop domestic clean energy sources and cut carbon pollution, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Director Tommy P. Beaudreau today joined Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley to announce the proposed notice of sale for nearly 80,000 acres offshore Maryland for commercial wind energy leasing. (<http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/secretary-jewell-announces-milestone-for-commercial-wind-energy-development-in-federal-waters.cfm>).

[Wind Energy Production Tax Credit To Die Quietly December 31](http://www.kcet.org/news/rewire/wind/wind-production-tax-credit-to-die-quietly-december-31.html). This time last year, the big renewable energy issue was the Federal Wind Power Production Tax Credit (PTC), which was set to expire at the end of 2012. The subsidy, which provides owners of wind turbines with 2.2 cents in tax credits for every kilowatt-hour the turbines produce, was called critical to the survival of the American wind industry. Wind advocates said that letting the PTC expire could kill the wind industry in the U.S., taking thousands of jobs and non-carbon electrical power with it. (<http://www.kcet.org/news/rewire/wind/wind-production-tax-credit-to-die-quietly-december-31.html>).

[New Wind Power Cheaper than Existing Coal and Natural Gas in Many Parts of the Country](http://blog.ucsusa.org/new-wind-power-cheaper-than-existing-coal-and-natural-gas-in-many-parts-of-the-country-337). Yesterday, we released an [update of our 2012 Ripe for Retirement study](#) that was published in the Electricity Journal, which analyzed the economic viability of updating the nation's coal fleet compared to investing in cleaner alternatives. Thanks to new technology developments that have lowered the costs of new wind projects and increased electricity production, our new analysis shows wind power could play an even greater role than natural gas in replacing existing coal plants. (<http://blog.ucsusa.org/new-wind-power-cheaper-than-existing-coal-and-natural-gas-in-many-parts-of-the-country-337>).

Tools

[Cornell University Launches 'One-Stop Shop' Climate Change Information Website](http://climatechange.cornell.edu). The website, climatechange.cornell.edu, is a one-stop shop for everything climate change says David Wolfe, faculty

fellow at Cornell University's Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future and chair of the center's Climate Change Task Force. (<http://www.green-energy-news.com/nwslinks/clips1113/nov13023.html>).

AWEA Market Database Pro is a comprehensive, interactive online database includes information on all wind energy projects and wind-related manufacturing facilities in the U.S. (<http://www.awea.org/Resources/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=5728&navItemNumber=5776#!>).

Land-Based Wind Energy Guidelines Tier 4 Post-Construction Studies and Reporting. The 3rd broadcast in the FWS Wind Energy Training series and accompanying materials are now available online. The live broadcast originally aired on October 30. Christy Johnson-Hughes of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is joined by a special presenter on fatality estimation from the USGS and leads a roundtable discussion on post-construction studies and reporting. Manuela Huso (USGS), begins the broadcast with an enlightening presentation on fatality estimators. In the second hour, Christy is joined by Jerry Roppe with Iberdrola Renewables, returning guest Jeff Everett with the USFWS, and Special Agent in Charge Jill Birchell, with the USFWS Office of Law Enforcement in the Pacific Southwest Region. The roundtable discussion covers many common questions, and some less common, that are often raised regarding Tier 4 studies and reporting. (http://www.fws.gov/windenergy/wind_training/wind_training.html).

Utility Scale Renewable Energy Development – Project siting & Conflict Resolution Webinar.

December 18, 2013 (Wednesday) 1:00 PM – Eastern Time. Registration: There is no registration and no fee for attending this webinar. To join the webinar go to <http://connect.msu.edu/ncrcrd>, “enter as a guest” is by default already chosen. Type your name into the text box provided, and click on “Enter Room”. You are now in the meeting room for the webinar.

Upcoming Events

Announcing the 4th Broadcast of Wind Energy Training Series for Voluntary Land-Based Wind Energy Guidelines. The fourth broadcast will air on Wednesday, January 29, 2014, 2:00 to 4:00 pm ET. Host Christy Johnson-Hughes will be joined by Kathy Boydston (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies), Charles Newcomb (Endurance Wind Power), and Jennifer Norris (Ohio Department of Natural Resources). The broadcast will focus on how the WEG apply to distributed wind energy projects; coordination with State agencies; and the identification of “species of habitat fragmentation concern” as defined in the WEG. E-mail windbroadcast@fws.gov with the subject "register" to register for this broadcast. [View previous broadcasts and related materials.](#)

Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference will be in Kansas City, MO January 26-29, 2014. For more information: <http://www.midwestfw.org/>.

AWEA Wind Project Siting Seminar will be held in New Orleans, LA January 29-30, 2014. For more information: <http://www.awea.org/events/Event.aspx?EventID=21659&navItemNumber=5647>.

Check out the **Nebraska Wind Energy and Wildlife Project website** at: <http://snr.unl.edu/renewableenergy/wind/> and **Wind Energy and Wildlife news** at: <http://www.scoop.it/t/wind-energy-and-wildlife>.

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