



## Nebraska Wind Energy and Wildlife News

January 2, 2014 – Happy New Year!

Results for the **2013 Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey Wind Energy and Wildlife Questions** are available for the Nebraska Public Power District, Omaha Public Power District, and Lincoln Electric System. A report that compares the responses of residents of the power districts and handouts for each public power district are available at: <http://snr.unl.edu/renewableenergy/wind/moreinformation.asp>.

### Around Nebraska...

**[NextEra Energy completes sale of interests in 2 wind projects.](#)** [NextEra Energy Inc.](#) subsidiary Steele Flats Wind Project LLC notified FERC of the completion of its [sale](#) of all of the class B membership interests in wind projects in Nebraska and Michigan to Bank of America Corp. subsidiary BAL Investment & Advisory Inc., or an affiliate of BAL Investment and potentially one or more unidentified investors. (<http://www.snl.com/Interactivex/article.aspx?CdlId=A-26383399-11814>).

**[FERC OKs Invenergy sale of passive interests in planned Neb. wind project.](#)** FERC on Dec. 18 approved [Invenergy Wind LLC](#) subsidiary Prairie Breeze Wind Energy LLC's [proposed](#) sale of passive, noncontrolling class A membership interests in Prairie Breeze Holdings LLC to subsidiaries of [JPMorgan Chase & Co.](#), [General Electric Co.](#) and [Bank of America Corp.](#) (<http://www.snl.com/Interactivex/article.aspx?CdlId=A-26332333-13617>).

**[Grasslands under siege in the Plains.](#)** If you're someone that enjoys wildlife, clean water, saving soil and native grasslands, get ready to be disappointed. According to U.S. Department of Agriculture data, from 2011 to 2012 Nebraska led the nation in number of acres converted from noncropland to cropland: a total of 54,876.6 acres. ([http://journalstar.com/sports/local/outdoors/grasslands-under-siege-in-the-plains/article\\_7bcf969e-0fea-59ee-ba77-8ca1c1eb3023.html](http://journalstar.com/sports/local/outdoors/grasslands-under-siege-in-the-plains/article_7bcf969e-0fea-59ee-ba77-8ca1c1eb3023.html)).

## Around the Nation & World...

### *Wind and Wildlife*

**[Turbulence hits farm: Wind facility owner and utility launch dueling lawsuits.](#)** The owner of the state's largest wind farm and the utility purchasing its power are suing each other over breach of contract in a dispute centering on the level of bird-protection measures in place at the facility. (<http://www.greatfalltribune.com/article/20131220/NEWS01/312200024/Montana-wind-farm-owner-San-Diego-utility-suing-each-other>).

**['Bird-friendly' turbines on Altamont Pass sought by researchers, energy companies.](#)** They're touted as the future of energy production -- clean, efficient and renewable. But there's a dark side to wind turbines for local wildlife -- towers and spinning blades kill thousands of birds and bats on the Altamont Pass east of Livermore each year. The world's most heavily studied area for wildlife impacts could also be the proving ground for a new type of turbine that county officials and ecologists hope will be less deadly. ([http://www.mercurynews.com/breaking-news/ci\\_24826841/researchers-wind-energy-companies-look-for-bird-friendly](http://www.mercurynews.com/breaking-news/ci_24826841/researchers-wind-energy-companies-look-for-bird-friendly)).

**[Plug Pulled on EcoHarmony Wind Project in Fillmore County, Minn.](#)** A third major wind project in southeastern Minnesota has ceased development after years of planning and controversy. However, the project layout was overhauled in early 2013, shrinking to 116 megawatts by Gamesa Technology Corp., the new owner, after being classified as a high-risk site amidst criticism from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and some citizens. (<http://www.govtech.com/local/Plug-Pulled-on-EcoHarmony-Wind-Project-in-Fillmore-County-Minn.html>).

**[Is Interior's eagle plan good for the birds?](#)** In exchange for the right to kill eagles, a San Diego-based wind developer offered to retrofit 75 power poles to reduce eagle deaths near California's Lake San Antonio, prime winter habitat for the iconic birds. Another California developer agreed to upgrade 11 "problem" power poles, idle certain wind turbines and donate \$20,000 for eagle conservation. The Obama administration argues steps like those will keep eagle populations robust, even as it issues permits of up to 30 years for wind farms to kill them. (<http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1059992268>).

**[MassCEC Announces Two Studies To Help Facilitate Offshore Wind Projects.](#)** As part of Gov. Deval Patrick's efforts to support the development of an offshore wind industry hub in Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC) has [announced](#) the preliminary results of a multi-year study of marine wildlife and launched an effort to study the logistics of interconnecting offshore wind to the New England power grid. ([http://www.nawindpower.com/naw/e107\\_plugins/content/content.php?content.12419](http://www.nawindpower.com/naw/e107_plugins/content/content.php?content.12419)).

**[Company: Wyoming wind farm eagle deaths overestimated.](#)** The developers of what could become the nation's largest wind energy project say the U.S. Bureau of Land Management has overestimated how many eagles could be killed by wind turbines at the site. They say they're planning a variety of measures to reduce eagle deaths at the \$5 billion Chokecherry/Sierra Madre wind power project south of Rawlins, and those steps will result in fewer deaths than the BLM estimate of 46-64 per year. ([http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/wyoming/company-wyoming-wind-farm-eagle-deaths-overestimated/article\\_e6fa7f2-7422-5114-be27-bcacd43f0e7e.html](http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/wyoming/company-wyoming-wind-farm-eagle-deaths-overestimated/article_e6fa7f2-7422-5114-be27-bcacd43f0e7e.html)).

**[United States: Wind And Winged Wildlife: Increased Federal Oversight Of Wind Energy.](#)** 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"). Wind farms face a somewhat unique environmental challenge: a clean source of energy with a potential dirty impact to wildlife.

**[Impacts of Industrial Wind Development on Wildlife and Ridgeline Habitat.](https://www.wind-watch.org/documents/impacts-of-industrial-wind-development-on-wildlife-and-ridgeline-habitat/)** A photo essay about the impacts of wind energy development on wildlife and habitats. (<https://www.wind-watch.org/documents/impacts-of-industrial-wind-development-on-wildlife-and-ridgeline-habitat/>).

**[Collateral damage.](http://www.toledoblade.com/Editorials/2013/12/30/Collateral-damage.html)** For Ohio's — and America's — environmental and economic health, the transition from fossil fuels to renewable sources to meet the nation's energy needs must continue and even accelerate. Greater reliance on wind power is an essential part of the process, but that will require a better balance between energy production and wildlife preservation than the nation has achieved so far. (<http://www.toledoblade.com/Editorials/2013/12/30/Collateral-damage.html>).

**[Bristol residents question offshore wind project.](http://bangordailynews.com/2013/12/30/business/bristol-residents-question-offshore-wind-project/)** A committee appointed by the Bristol Board of Selectmen plans to determine whether the town has any say over a proposed offshore wind project 2 ½ miles off Monhegan Island — and 10 miles away from Bristol. Bristol residents voiced concern at a public hearing earlier this year about the impact of the proposed wind tower on wildlife, shellfish habitat and general scenery. (<http://bangordailynews.com/2013/12/30/business/bristol-residents-question-offshore-wind-project/>).

## **Wildlife**

**[Endangered Species Act Turns 40 on December 28.](http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/pressrel/2013/12/19/2013esaTurns40.php)** The Endangered Species Act, the bipartisan legislation that is credited with saving hundreds of species from extinction, was signed into law by President Nixon 40 years ago on December 28, 1973. (<http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/pressrel/2013/12/19/2013esaTurns40.php>).

**[Endangered Species Daily Facts.](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/ESDaily/)** Information about threatened and endangered species in the upper Midwest will be posted daily at: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/ESDaily/>.

## **Wind**

**[Wind's tax credit winds down, but debate at full force.](http://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/Energy-Voices/2013/12/30/Wind-s-tax-credit-winds-down-but-debate-at-full-force)** Subsidies for wind energy end at midnight Dec. 31, but Democrats are pushing for renewal of wind's production tax credit for 2014. Opponents say the subsidies are costly and inefficient. (<http://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/Energy-Voices/2013/12/30/Wind-s-tax-credit-winds-down-but-debate-at-full-force>).

**[NCSU researcher devises means to make wind power friendly to grids.](http://wraltechwire.com/ncsu-researcher-devises-means-to-make-wind-power-friendly-to-grids-/13264197/#.UsWXi1ChHl8.twitter)** The ups-and-downs of wind power triggered by the shifts in speed pose a threat to generators in power grids, but an NCSU researcher and a colleague at Johns Hopkins say they have devised a mean to smooth out demands of equipment. (<http://wraltechwire.com/ncsu-researcher-devises-means-to-make-wind-power-friendly-to-grids-/13264197/#.UsWXi1ChHl8.twitter>).

**[This week at Interior December 20, 2013.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umzTs-MGbuU&feature=youtu.be)** Clean and renewable energy, and its economic impact, on display this week in Baltimore; Secretary Jewell announces nearly \$7million in awards to help advance the administration's Climate Action Plan. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umzTs-MGbuU&feature=youtu.be>).

**[Danbury is polling voters on Wild Meadows wind project.](http://www.unionleader.com/article/20131224/NEWS05/131229682/1007/news05)** Danbury is polling voters by mail to see if they support the Wild Meadows wind farm project or oppose having wind turbines in town. "Whatever the people decide will be the position of the town of Danbury," said Board of Selectmen Chairman Jim Phelps. (<http://www.unionleader.com/article/20131224/NEWS05/131229682/1007/news05>).

## Tools

**[American Wind Wildlife Institute](http://awwi.org/) & [National Wind Coordinating Collaborative](http://nationalwind.org/) – New websites.** (<http://awwi.org/> <http://nationalwind.org/>).

**[Cornell University Launches ‘One-Stop Shop’ Climate Change Information Website.](http://www.green-energy-news.com/nwslnks/clips1113/nov13023.html)** The website, [climatechange.cornell.edu](http://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/nwslnks/clips1113/nov13023.html>).

**[AWEA Market Database Pro](http://www.awea.org/Resources/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=5728&navItemNumber=5776#!)** 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.](http://www.fws.gov/windenergy/wind_training/wind_training.html)** 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](http://www.fws.gov/windenergy/wind_training/wind_training.html)).

## 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](mailto: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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