



Seneca County Park District
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SCPD Board of Park Commissioners

- Lori Hall
- Bill McAllister
- Carl Miller
- Jim Nordholt
- Roland Zimmerman

SCPD Executive Director
Sarah Betts

MISSION

The mission of the Seneca County Park District is to preserve, protect, manage, and promote our natural resources; to educate and develop an appreciation of the natural, rural, historical, and cultural aspects of Seneca County.

January 10, 2019

EXHIBIT "A"

Dear Ohio Power Sitting Board members,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Seneca County Park District Board of Park Commissioners. The District is concerned about the effects the proposed industrial wind turbines will have on the nature preserves of Seneca County. Therefore, we are requesting a 2.5-mile radius turbine free buffer zone be placed around all Seneca County Nature Preserves. We believe this buffer zone allows reasonable accommodation for both the needs of SCPD and any proposed industrial wind turbine project in Seneca County.

Nature Preserves offer safe havens for a variety of wildlife. Animals whom use and reside in the nature preserves rely on one another and play an important role in our global environment. Natural areas are essential to provide not only native creatures with basic habitat components, but also a place for migratory animals to rest and feed during migration, hibernate over winter, have a nesting habitat, rear young, and so forth. Placing wind turbines close to our preserve places our wildlife, especially migratory birds, bats, pollinators, and beneficial insects, in harm's way.

Bats have an irregular flight pattern and are small creatures whom are effected by weather conditions when in flight, much like small migratory birds, pollinators, and beneficial insects. Through research by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), foraging zones for Indiana Bats have been established as a minimum of 2.5 miles, however, may extend beyond 5 miles between and around maternity roost trees, according to the "Indiana Bat Section 7 and Section 10 Guidance for Wind Energy Projects" (Revised: 26 October 2011). Utilizing the already standardized (recognized and accepted by the turbine companies) radius for bats, a minimum 2.5-mile turbine free buffer around the preserves would allow for the large quantities of diverse sized wildlife to enter and exit the habitat with minimal risk and keep the preserve areas out of the "flicker" zones.

Less than 10% of Seneca County exists as natural areas, which are found in fragments across the landscape of the County. Adding industrial sized turbines in close proximity to nature preserves would cause additional extreme vertical fragmentation of the landscape and further fragmentation of habitats on a landscape and macro-landscape scale (for wildlife migrating through from Canada to South American countries). Protecting nature preserves, these natural gems, and safe corridors between them is crucial for the wildlife that use them for access to their most essential components of life; food, water, shelter, and space.

Moreover, Bowen Nature Preserve contains wetlands under contract with the US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service, through the Conservation Reserve Program. This designation serves to promote migratory wildlife respite sites, breeding, and rearing grounds. Placing wind turbines nearby these highly sensitive wetland and wooded riparian habitats conflicts with the intended purpose of these protected areas. Other Nature Preserves are cooperative efforts with Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), where the ODNR property is leased by the SCPD. These areas also include sensitive wetland and wooded riparian habitats.

Additionally, our Nature Preserves offer an opportunity for visitors to experience natural scenic areas away from development. Numerous studies have indicated that spending time in outdoor areas positively impacts mental and physical health. Situating industrial wind turbines in close proximity to a preserve diminishes this natural experience for park patrons.

Amongst other missions, SCPD also seeks to provide living history sites for public education relating to the natural and cultural aspects of Seneca County. Attempting to depict life in the 1800s with industrial sized turbines looming overhead will detract significantly from the experience and potential knowledge gained from such programs.

We have been entrusted by the public with the care of Seneca County Nature Preserves, and are bound by our mission statement to act in the best interest of the parks, wildlife, and patrons. Therefore, we feel it is our duty to request a minimum turbine-free buffer of 2.5 miles be incorporated around all SCPD Nature Preserves for any industrial turbine project proposed in Seneca County. We believe this proposed buffer zone allows both SCPD and the industrial wind turbine projects to meet the needs of their respective stakeholders, and strongly urge you to consider adopting this proposed buffer zone.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this critical topic.

Sincerely,



Sarah Betts
Executive Director, Seneca County Park District