

Basic Learning Points:

Distributed Wind Energy, State Coordination, and Species of Habitat Fragmentation Concern



Distributed Wind Energy

- 1) Distributed wind energy facilities include community-scale and residential-scale projects.
 - a. Community-scale projects use fewer turbines and have a smaller footprint than utility-scale; meet a local need; use shorter turbines.
 - b. Residential-scale projects are single turbines less than 100kW and meet on-site need.
- 2) Distributed wind energy projects should follow Tiers 1 and 2 of the Service's Land-Based Wind Energy Guidelines (Guidelines).
- 3) Tiers 1 and 2 can be completed quickly using information publicly available online. Being informed can help avoid unexpected issues!
- 4) Communication is key! Service field offices can answer your questions. If you contact the Service and receive no response after 60 days, you can move forward and still be in adherence with the Guidelines.
- 5) In rare cases, Tiers 1 and 2 may indicate risk to species of concern and their habitats that warrants further analysis in Tiers 3 and 4.

State Coordination

- 1) Overall, the Guidelines are compatible with the varied State policies and regulations that apply to wind energy development in the U.S.
- 2) Communicate with the state wildlife agency regarding requirements, guidelines, or recommendations in your project location.
 - a. State-protected species lists are often broader than the federally-protected species list – talk to your state agency AND the Service!

- b.** State agencies, as well as the Service, have requirements for handling state- and federally- protected species.
- 3)** States have GIS regarding species and their habitats. Some are publicly available, in some states you may need to make a request.

Species of Habitat Fragmentation Concern

- 1)** Habitat fragmentation is separation of a block of habitat into segments such that the genetic or demographic ability of the population surviving in the remaining habitat segments is reduced.
- 2)** The Guidelines focus analysis on “species of concern.”
- 3)** “Species of Habitat Fragmentation Concern” are a subset of “species of concern” that are particularly prone to habitat fragmentation.
- 4)** Tier 4b of the Guidelines assesses direct and indirect impacts of habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation. Tier 4b studies should be conducted if Tier 3 studies indicate:
 - a.** the presence of species of habitat fragmentation concern, or
 - b.** significant direct and indirect adverse impacts to species of concern.
- 5)** The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies is piloting draft criteria for states to use to identify species of habitat fragmentation concern.
- 6)** The draft criteria are designed to produce lists that are limited so that developers will only be asked to conduct further analysis on the species that truly have special concerns.
- 7)** The pilot will conclude in March 2014 and the results will be shared publicly.