

# Basic Learning Points: Eagle Conservation Plan Guidance

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- 1) In accordance with our efforts to ensure that renewable energy development is compatible with fish and wildlife conservation, the Service has released its updated Eagle Conservation Plan Guidance – Module 1 Land-based Wind Energy (ECPG).
- 2) Communication with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service *early* in the life of the project and *throughout* project development is encouraged!
- 3) The ECPG is intended to promote compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act with respect to eagles and wind development. Golden Eagles and Bald Eagles are provided protection under these statutes, and the Service implements permit programs for eagles through implementing regulations.
- 4) The ECPG provides assistance to wind developers and Service biologists who evaluate potential impacts from proposed wind energy projects and others in applying the regulatory permit standards as specified in the 2009 Eagle Permit Rule (50 CFR 22.26).
- 5) The ECPG was specifically developed to assist project developers in preparing an Eagle Conservation Plan that assesses the risk of their projects to eagles and evaluates how siting, design, and operational modifications could mitigate that risk.
- 6) The ECPG helps us work together to protect eagle populations and builds on our current knowledge and provides additional tools to predict the level of risks to eagles on a project-by-project basis. This guidance document incorporates adaptive management approaches that will allow us to improve how we assess risks to eagles.

- 7) Following the ECPG helps a wind project developer or operator to develop an Eagle Conservation Plan that considers and addresses aspects necessary for a take permit application.
- 8) The ECPG provides Service staff and others with the background and tools necessary to evaluate such applications.
- 9) When the procedures recommended in the Eagle Conservation Plan are followed, Service staff can efficiently determine whether a permit can be issued. Service staff worked with the best biometricians in the U.S. Geological Survey to develop the eagle predictive take models, and they have been constructed to be flexible enough to handle the wide range and quality of survey data seen from project developers.
- 10) The process proposed in the ECPG is also flexible enough to accommodate and evaluate other applicant-proposed candidate models as part of the adaptive management process.
- 11) While an Eagle Conservation Plan is not required for a developer to apply for an eagle take permit, only permit applications that meet regulatory requirements will be considered.
- 12) The ECPG provides a recommended path for project proponents to meet regulatory requirements (assuming project impacts to eagle populations are reasonable), and while not the only path, it is what is recommended to help ensure that renewable energy development is compatible with fish and wildlife conservation.