

# 'Highlanders' call for ban on big wind

MONTEREY — Highlanders for Responsible Development, a group of Highland citizens and landowners which formed early this year in opposition to wind development in the county, submitted a zoning amendment request last Wednesday, calling for a ban on all commercial/industrial wind development in the county and limiting the height of any structure to 200 feet.

"Highland County citizens and landowners have clearly expressed their grave concerns about the development of industrial-scale wind energy in this county," HRD's board of directors — Charlotte Stephenson, Randy Richardson, and Patti Reum — wrote in a letter to the department of building and zoning. "Many have also expressed concern about any tall structures with flashing aircraft warning lights. At the same time, small-scale wind turbines might well be helpful to farmers and some other residents by reducing their electric

bills with home-grown energy from a renewable source."

The first proposed amendment prohibits industrial-scale wind development in all districts of the county. The second bans any structure exceeding 200 feet or which would require Federal Aviation Administration approval and specific lighting requirements.

In addition to the amendments, HRD defined what constitutes a wind turbine, distinguished between small-scale and industrial-scale wind development, and set a protocol for how to measure a turbine.

HRD stated the following reasons to approve the amendments:

■ Industrial wind turbines are not compatible with the goals and objectives of the county as stated in the comprehensive plan.

■ Industrial wind turbines are not compatible with the purposes, as stated in the zoning ordinance, of the agricultural and

conservation districts where most would be located, though they are not specifically prohibited.

■ Industrial wind turbines on the tops of our highest ridges would result in the fragmentation of forest land and would have serious impacts on birds, bats, and other wildlife.

■ Wind turbines or any other tall structures with flashing lights day and night would intrude on the rural character of the county and would negatively affect our growing tourist industry.

■ Industrial wind turbines are not feasible without large federal tax subsidies and will not pay for their negative impacts on the lives, livelihoods, and property values of other landowners, businesses and residents.

The planning commission will review HRD's request Thursday, Feb. 24.

—Will O'Connor

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