

JMU receives \$85,000 to develop scoring system

HARRISONBURG — Dr. Jonathan Miles, a professor at James Madison University, submitted a proposal for the system ascribing numerical scores to parcels of real property to determine whether they'd be suitable for industrial wind or solar facilities. The "Virginia Renewables Scoring System for Siting" will be developed by JMU, which received a grant in the amount of \$85,505 and began work in August.

The project is mandated by Senate Bill 262, which created the Virginia Energy Plan. Funding comes from the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy's division of energy budget, which comes from its annual U.S. Department of Energy program formula grant.

In the proposal to DMME, Miles said the Landscape Classification System will be used as a basis for the scoring system, was technically straightforward, but "politically sensitive."

From 2003-05, JMU and members of the Virginia Wind Energy Collaborative developed a landscape classification. That process, the proposal says, resulted in an understanding that developing siting strategies for energy systems "must incorporate a process that identifies key stakeholders, and supports meaningful and informative dialog between these key stakeholders."

The land classification system is the foundation on which to add new Geographical Information System layers, said Miles.

"The LCS supports efforts on the part of the wind power community to recognize, avoid, and minimize adverse environmental impacts arising from utility-scale wind power development in Virginia," said Miles in the proposal. The proposal claims the system is "recognized as a highly visual resource developed to better inform responsible wind power

development in Virginia to the benefit of environmental groups, wind developers, state and local agencies, and citizens."

The LCS was developed by JMU and members of the Virginia Wind Energy Collaborative from 2003-2005. An environmental working group established to help develop the system ultimately disagreed on how the classification map should be used and described. Two different versions are available; for more on the issue and another version of the system, see: www.vawind.org.

Miles and his colleagues, under an advisory group, will gather information from regions statewide before a scoring system is finalized. The five regions identified for hearings and meetings with planners coincide with the areas of the state most likely to have proposed uses for large-scale wind or solar power:

- Albemarle County and the Central Shenandoah Planning District Region (which was held this week).
- Floyd, Grayson, Patrick and Roanoke counties.
- Accomack, Chesapeake, Northampton counties and Hampton Roads and Virginia Beach.
- Bland, Tazewell and Wise counties.
- Gloucester, Lancaster, Mathews and Northumberland counties.

The final presentation will be to the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy in Richmond next June.

The total funding request to DMME was for \$78,832, mostly for personnel and equipment, plus nearly \$7,000 in in-kind funds from JMU for using its facilities and providing a master's student.

— James Jacenich