

JOHN R. SWEET
8562 Jackson River Road
Mustoe, VA 24468
540-468-2222

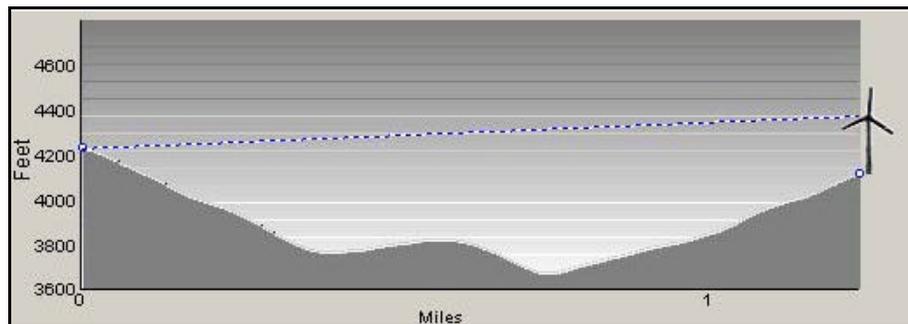
30 October 2006

Clerk of the State Corporation Commission
Document Control Center
P O Box 2118
Richmond, VA 23218-2118

Re: PUE-2005-00101 Highland New Wind Development (HNWD)

I presented testimony to the Commission at the hearing in Monterey in March of this year. This report covers a different aspect of this issue. You have heard testimony on the importance of tourism to the economy of Highland County and on the type of experience Highland tourists expect to have. In short, our tourism industry is based on Highland's rural nature, scenic views, abundant wildlife, and dark night skies. This report will demonstrate the visual impact of an industrial wind facility on Highland County and the surrounding area.

For this purpose I have chosen four sites relatively close to the proposed facility and two sites further away for detailed evaluation. These are examples only. Any number of other points could have been chosen. We begin by entering Highland County from the west on US 250, the historic Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike. This is a designated scenic corridor, shown in the county's Comprehensive Plan, figure X-1, page 171. Less than a mile from the state line there is a pull off with an expansive view across the mountains of Highland County. Below is a line-of-sight diagram from this overlook eastward toward Red Oak Knob.



As with all such diagrams in this report, the viewpoint is at the left and the turbine site is at the right. The blue line points to 260 feet above ground level, which is the approximate height of the hub on the 400-foot turbines proposed for this project. These diagrams were produced from USGS topographic maps using Terrain Navigator Pro software. I have added the outline of a turbine to this diagram to aid in visualizing the scale. At right is a photograph of Red Oak Knob with ten 400-foot turbines added, approximately to scale. This is not intended as a precise depiction of the proposed project but just as another aid in visualizing the scale.

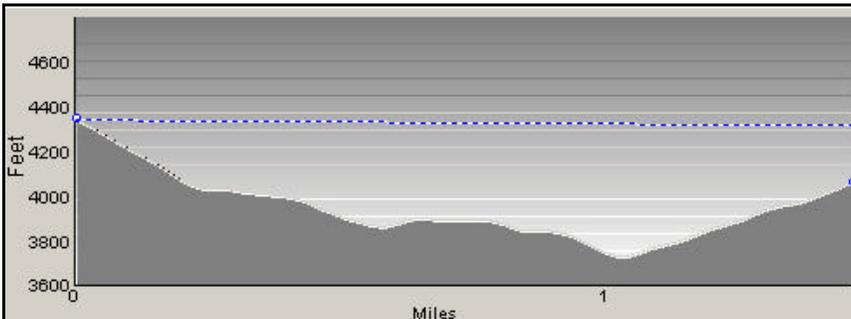




At left is a photograph showing US 250 and the above-described overlook in the foreground with Red Oak Knob beyond. All of the photographs in this report were taken by the author on 4 October 2006.

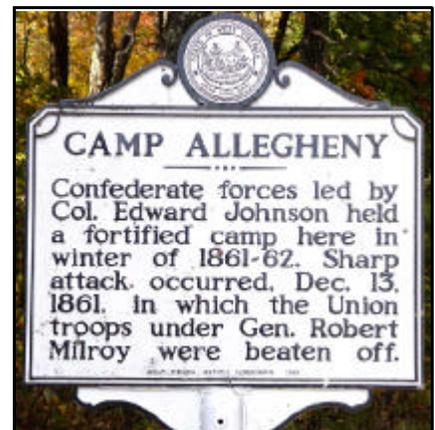


We now move to a spot on the flank of Bear Mountain on route 601, 0.7 mile from its intersection with US 250. This is a favored destination of birders and is the road that leads to Bear Mountain Retreat, a lodge designed for eco-tourists, birders, amateur astronomers, and others seeking a refuge in the mountains. The view of Red Oak Knob from this location is shown in the second photograph at left and the corresponding line-of-sight profile is shown immediately below. All ten of the turbines proposed for Red Oak Knob would be clearly visible from this location, most of them all the way to ground level.



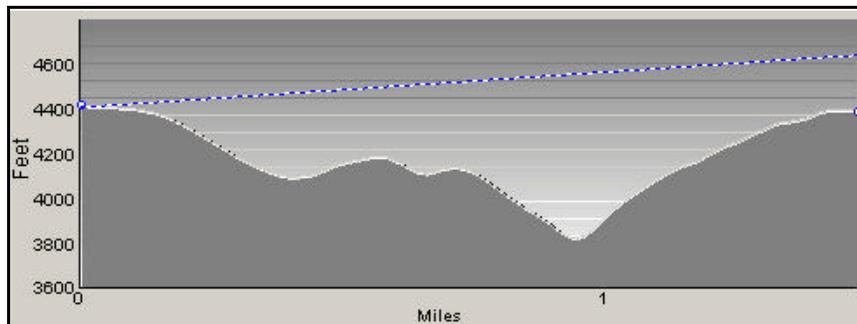
These first two lines of sight are indicated by the two pink lines on the location map on page 3. The turbine locations, indicated by blue diamonds — on the attached maps, are only approximate since the developer has not submitted a site plan. They are numbered for reference only.

The next site of interest is Camp Allegheny, located at Top of Allegheny, just over the border in Pocahontas County, WV. Camp Allegheny is one of the best preserved Civil War sites anywhere. One small building, minor road changes, and some fencing are the only manmade features that distinguish the present site from its status in 1861. The historical marker on US 250 describing the site is shown at right. The fortifications referred to are located at the western red loop on the map on page 3, referred to below as battle site 2. The main engagement between Johnson and Milroy took place in the eastern red loop, referred to as battle site 1. All of the turbines would be clearly visible from site 1, at a distance of 1.3 to 3.5 miles. The view would be somewhat obscured by intervening terrain from site 2.

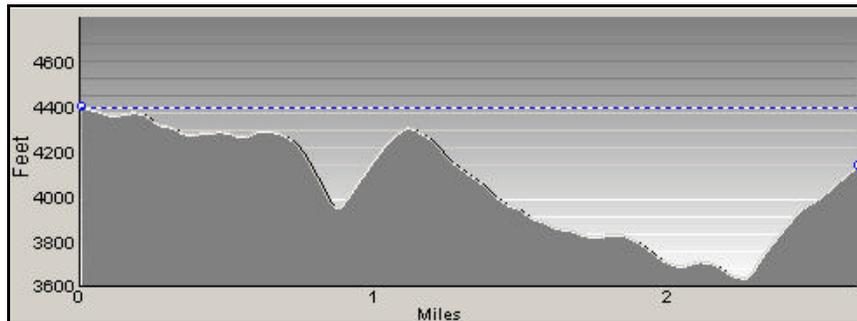




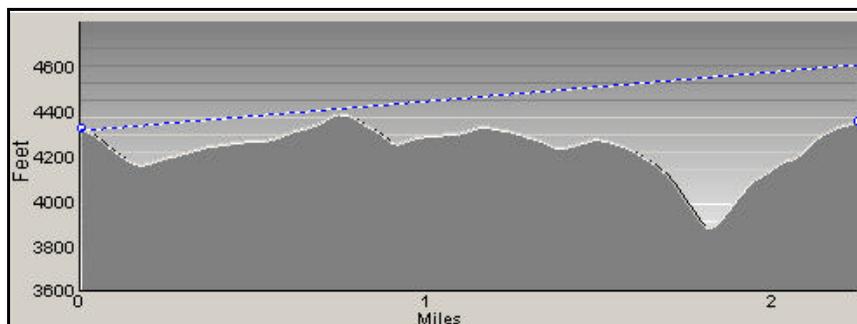
The photograph at left shows the Forest Service sign describing Camp Allegheny. The Confederate fortifications are on the distant ridge above the right half of the sign. The view at right is from battle site 1 looking east toward the proposed turbine locations on Tamarack Ridge, left side of photo, and Red Oak Knob. The three line-of-sight diagrams from Camp Allegheny are also shown as blue lines on the map on page 3.



Battle site 1 to Tamarack turbine #3.

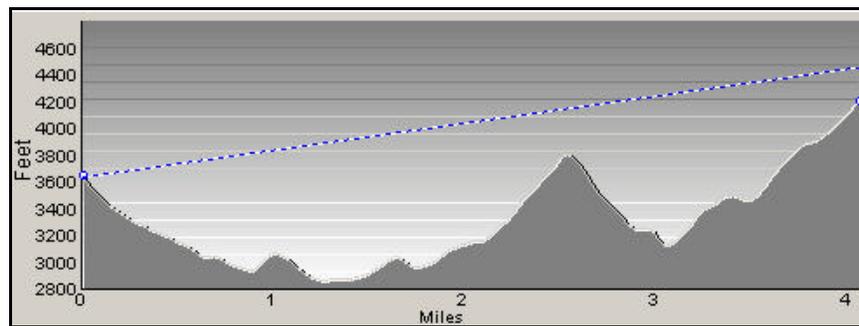


Battle site 1 to Red Oak turbine #2

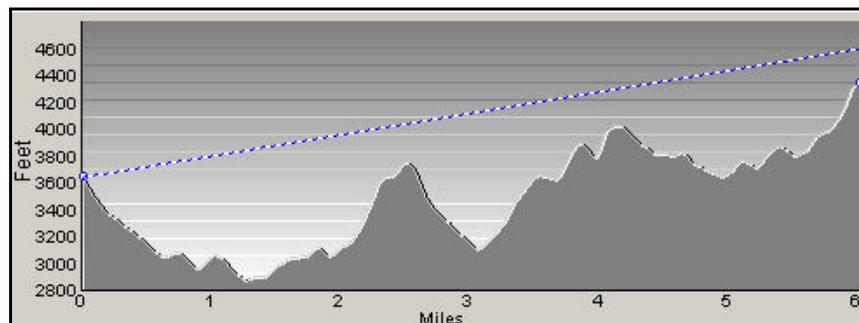


Battle site 2 to Tamarack Turbine #2

We now move to the east for a somewhat more distant view of the project site from an overlook on US 250 on the flank of Monterey Mountain, one-half mile below the summit. This is an important tourist route in the county and a destination in itself for views of the Blue Grass Valley. Red Oak Knob is the bald summit on the skyline and Tamarack Ridge lies beyond it. All ten of the proposed turbines on Red Oak Knob would be visible from this location, along with several of those on Tamarack Ridge. Two lines of sight from this overlook are shown below and are indicated by the red lines on the location map on page 6.

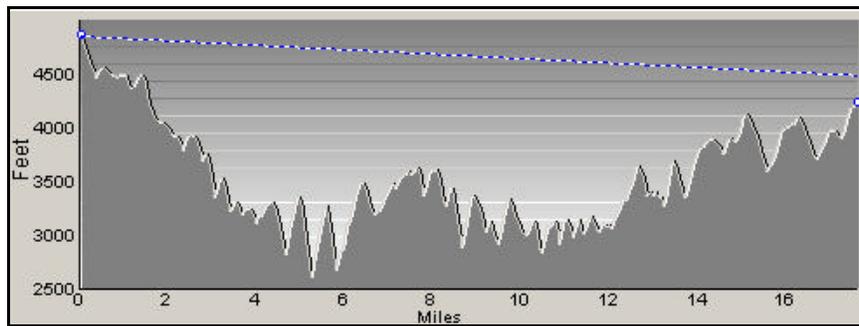


Monterey Mountain overlook to Red Oak turbine #6.



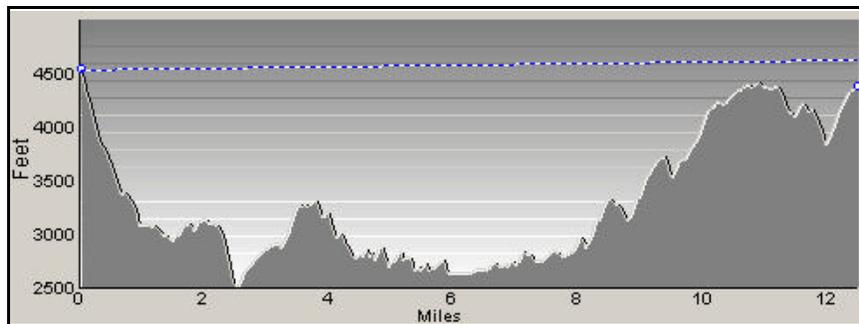
Monterey Mountain overlook to Tamarack turbine #1.

Finally, we look at views from two major tourist destinations in West Virginia, Spruce Knob in Pendleton County, and Bald Knob on the Cass Scenic Railroad in Pocahontas County. Spruce Knob is in the upper right corner of the location map on page 8, while Bald Knob is at the left edge of the same map.



Spruce Knob to Red Oak turbine #5.

The lines of sight are shown by the heavy, black lines on this map. Spruce Knob is the highest point in West Virginia and is located in the Spruce Knob – Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area. Bald Knob is the highest point in Cass Scenic Railroad State Park and is the terminus for the historic steam logging railroad. Both peaks have observation decks and are renowned for their views. All 19 proposed turbines would be visible from both of these nationally-recognized sites.



Bald Knob to Tamarack turbine #3.

In closing I would like to mention one more significant site, shown at the bottom of this page. This is a simple tent in a field at the Bear Mountain Retreat but it is used by the Bear Mountain Hawk Watch, where raptors that follow this ridge during their migrations are counted. Red Oak Knob is seen just to the left of the tent. Bald Eagles and Golden Eagles live and nest in this area. All of these birds would be endangered if industrial wind turbines are built on these ridges. The site is also a valued location for amateur astronomers, as noted previously, because of the dark skies. This activity would be impacted by the required lighting on the turbines.

Thank you for your careful consideration of these serious impacts to the economy as well as the beauty of Highland County, which would inevitably result if the industrialization of our ridge tops is permitted.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John R. Sweet", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John R. Sweet

