

**ENERGIZE VERMONT PRESS CONFERENCE**  
Ridges Are Not Renewable Day – February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012  
Comments by Lukas B. Snelling, Executive Director

Two years ago, almost to the day, we gathered here in this room to announce the formation of a group dedicated to preserving Vermont's character while also moving our energy portfolio towards good, clean, and renewable sources. Almost every day since then we have seen concerned Vermonters join this effort, growing our ranks to include leading Vermonters who have been the guardians of Vermont's landscape and environment, and demonstrating that Vermonters have an undying passion to protect the things we love about our state.

Since then our state has embarked on an ad-hoc energy planning process, one that has done little to protect Vermont's natural resources, or our communities. But we know more now than we did two years ago. Now we no longer have just concerns for the impacts of large utility-scale wind projects on our ridges – we have experience. Today there are two operating projects, three approved or under construction, and over 10 in different stages on the drawing boards.

We find ourselves at a crossroads. The blasting on Lowell Mountain is happening. The blades above the houses in Sheffield are spinning. We have the ability to investigate the impacts of this industrial development on our ridges and take the time to determine if we should let this continue throughout the state.

I'd like to thank the legislature for taking the initial steps towards this investigation and receiving testimony today from experts on how these projects will impact our most pristine headwater streams and critical wildlife habitats. Members of the Senate National Resources and Energy Committee and the House Fish, Wildlife and Water Resources Committee will hear how important it is that we conserve our

natural resources in order to preserve Vermont's most effective tool for adapting to climate change.

These experts will tell legislators that fragmenting wildlife habitats in our high elevations prevents those areas from acting as refuges for wildlife as the climate changes. They will also describe how our high elevation ridges are home to our highest quality water, and once you lose that you can't get it back.

Later today, Energize Vermont will unveil a film that represents many, many hours of hard work. We worked with a team of committed individuals to travel around the state and region to research just how building out utility-scale wind in Vermont would impact our communities, our energy future and our natural resources. Today, we'll get to see the latest results of that project, and see why utility-scale wind isn't a fit for Vermont, and how smaller-scale community oriented renewable energy projects can bring us together and do their part to solve our climate challenges.

With that in mind, I turn now to the message of the day. United as members of Energize Vermont, as residents of communities impacted by utility-scale wind, as committed individuals to combating climate change, and as voting Vermonters, **we are calling for an immediate moratorium on further utility-scale wind development in Vermont.**

With so much at risk, the time to act is now. State regulators need to take time to assess the impacts of the projects already approved, to understand what we are losing, and what we have lost. Now is the time, armed with experience, to have the conversation about how we can revise our current hit or miss policy to ensure the safety of our wildlife habitats, water quality, and healthy communities.

I do not stand alone in making this call. Recently in a VPR commentary former editor of Vermont Life magazine Tom Slayton said, “We need a more thoughtful way to make [energy] choices when mountaintops are involved.”

In a recent Burlington Free Press Commentary banker and former chairman of the Vermont Environmental Board John Ewing wrote, “Wind power is important – but until we develop clearer public policy, transparency in location, and a process for citizen involvement, then the landscape in Vermont may be compromised without adequate review.”

Then in a Rutland Herald editorial it was reported Green Mountain Power’s CEO Mary Powell acknowledged, “that Vermont may need to take a breather on new wind projects to assess how and where to proceed after the battle in Lowell.”

Just two days ago, the Rutland Herald reported that when Chairman of the Public Service Board James Volz was asked, “How do we find the right balance between developing wind projects and preserving the character of Vermont?”, he answered, “I think that’s something the Legislature has to sort out.”

And so I ask, let’s sort it out.

It is important that this “time-out” not be seen as an effort to diminish our response to climate change, but rather as a necessary step to optimize our response while preserving the character of our state. A moratorium on developing one option does not prevent us from making strides towards a renewable driven economy.

Last week I had the incredible opportunity to facilitate a community conversation in Poultney Vermont about developing a group-net metered PV solar installation. The meeting was attended by over 60 Vermonters committed to combating climate change using community-oriented solutions. The thirst for solutions that are both

good for the environment and preserve the health of our communities was profound.

With the historic decline in PV solar pricing continuing, these projects and this technology will likely drive us into the future. One thing is clear, the resource is there: Vermont's solar resource is 620 times greater than its wind resource.

Meanwhile, ISO-New England and Hydro-Quebec currently have substantial excess generation capacity. When, and if, Vermont Yankee closes, we still have access to power from other sources that can meet our demand. A time out on big wind would also give us the opportunity to invest further in efficiency and ensure we have reduced our demand before building new generation sources.

And so today we say "Ridges are Not Renewable". As critical and disappearing habitat for plants and animals under stress from climate change, Vermont's ridges are our very best tool to fight climate change. Our forest lands are among the most important carbon sponges in the world. We should not develop them for a resource that can do very little to solve the real challenges we face.

The crossroads we stand at today has two paths. The first sacrifices our unspoiled mountains, diminishes the very best resource we can bring to the fight against climate change, creates conflict in our communities, discards our environmental ethic and undercuts the very character of Vermont. This is the path we will have chosen if we continue unabated. The second path saves the resource Vermont is uniquely positioned to contribute to our efforts to combat climate change, and harnesses the power of our communities to overcome the challenges we all face. Frankly, I'll take the second, and keep the mountains.

Thank you very much for coming today.