

Sun Journal

NRCM isn't working in Maine's best interest

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The Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) has earned a reputation for protecting the environment and the people of Maine.

It has championed wind power development, delayed Plum Creek's plan in Greenville and removed dams from Maine's rivers in recent years. These actions have had an impact Maine's economy.

To this columnist, the staff and board members of the NRCM seem to have lost their way. It appears they have gone from protecting Maine's environment and people to harming them.

This can't be good.

Leader in Wind Power Development

The NRCM's 2008 annual report boasts that the organization helped produce a plan "to make Maine a leader in wind power development, ensure Maine people receive tangible benefits, and protect Maine's quality of place."

Because of this plan, an estimated 15,000 to 40,000 acres of Maine's most beautiful and essential mountain top wildlife habitat will be destroyed by industrial wind developers.

Is a plan that causes permanent destruction of fragile mountain-top habitat protecting Maine's "quality of place"?

Full implementation of wind power, it is estimated, will double electricity rates.

Is a plan that threatens high-paying, high-tech jobs at world-class semiconductor manufacturers by driving up utility rates leadership?

Few jobs are being created, and according to the Maine Revenue Service, few tax revenues

will be forthcoming from wind development.

Is a plan that will bring few permanent jobs to Maine, and provide little or no tax revenue, while adding billions to the Federal deficit and debt, "ensuring tangible benefits"?

In Vinalhaven and Mars Hill, harmful mental and physical effects are troubling some citizens.

Is this a plan for protecting the people of Maine?

Delaying Plum Creek's Development Plan

According to the NRCM, Plum Creek's plan "will forever damage one of Maine's most remarkable areas." The NRCM is proud to have delayed Plum Creek's development plan, on procedural grounds, not the validity of the plan.

Plum Creek's plan will disturb only 1,500 acres for homes, buildings and roads, when allowed to move forward.

Compare that to a minimum of 15,000 acres permanently destroyed, and holes literally blasted out of mountainsides to make foundation sites for 25-story industrial wind turbines.

Don't they see contradiction in this?

The Greenville area will gain 975 new homes, 100 rental cabins, two new hotels, a golf course, a new marina, new convenience stores, barber and beauty shops, and gas stations. New sources of tax revenue to the localities and the state are estimated between \$25 million and \$75 million.

Sounds like good community development to me.

Plum Creek's plan could bring some 500 new permanent jobs, and perhaps over 1,000 temporary jobs, to the Moosehead region, five times what wind power development can claim.

How can they justify delaying jobs for working people in rural Maine?

A long-term conservation easement will be placed on 430,000 acres of forest by Plum Creek's plan as well.

Does NRCM think that stopping the protection of these forests is wrong?

Hydro Electric Compared to Wind Turbines

NRCM pushed for the removal of three hydroelectric dams on the Penobscot River, the

removal of the Edward's hydroelectric dam on the Kennebec River, and prevented the building of the Big-A dam on the West Branch of the Penobscot.

Ironically, their work wipes out 200 megawatts of clean renewable energy, and kills some 50 sustainable jobs in Maine.

Comparing the Big-A hydroelectric dam to the similar amount of erratic wind power output is not equal, but I'll do it anyway.

Side-by-side comparison for 40 megawatts: Big-A Hydro, cost \$100 million, 20 acres disturbed; Wind power, cost \$825 million, 2,500 acres destroyed.

Clearly, putting in the Big-A project would have been much better economically and environmentally for Maine. Ripping out more dams should be reconsidered. Investing the same \$825 million in modern fish ladders and modern hydro-turbines is a better idea.

So, the questions begin to mount up.

Why is the NRCM for policies that destroy essential fragile habitat?

Why is the NRCM for industrial policies that hurt Maine economically?

Why is the NRCM for policies that are physically harmful to people and animals?

Why is the NRCM for policies that threaten high-paying high tech jobs at world-class semiconductor manufacturers?

Basing economic and environmental policies on the questionable theory of anthropogenic global warming seems very thin.

These are just a few of the questions the people of Maine need to ask the staff, and the board members of the Natural Resources Council of Maine, and their supporters.

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