

Submitted Public Comment - Annette Smith  
Executive Director  
Vermonters for a Clean Environment  
November 10, 2023

Please share this with the RES Reform Working Group.

Dear Renewable Energy Standard Reform Working Group,

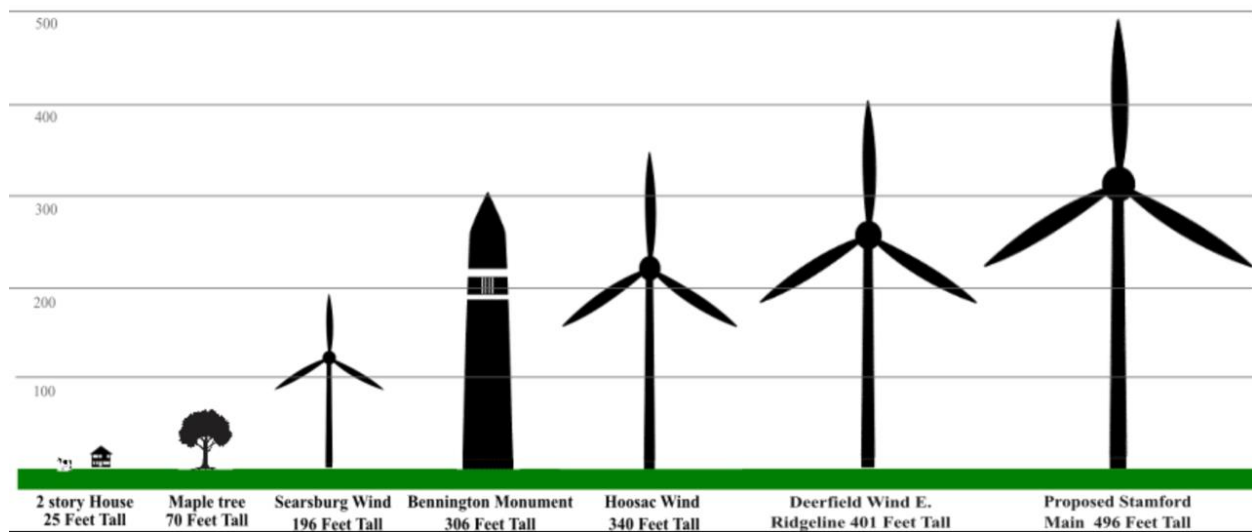
I write to provide further insights into the need to address renewable energy siting in Vermont. The RES Reform Working Group has so far been looking at broad policy changes that could result in the requirement for more in-state energy development. Some repetitious public comment has supported “new wind and solar”.

Vermonters for a Clean Environment continues to receive requests for assistance from Vermonters who are confronted with inappropriate renewable energy proposals. I provide one recent example to assist you in understanding how the RES, Standard Offer, and Net-Metering as Vermont’s energy policies currently exist are affecting the people who live here and the environment. We work with citizens on both solar and wind proposals. The information I am providing is focused on wind energy, as there is a painful history about what has happened, much of which seems to be forgotten. REV in particular has made it clear that one goal of the RES reform is to enable more industrial wind energy development. The story of Vermont’s experience is captured well in this documentary that was done by a teacher and is unbiased <https://youtu.be/oYFE1FlyutU>. It was shown more than once on Vermont Public Television. Please watch it.

At 1:01:31, the video contains a section about Act 174, which was intended to give towns more say about renewable energy siting. The information below shows that the legislature needs to do more.

Case Study currently taking place in Stamford, Vermont:

The Town of Stamford has experience with the effects of industrial wind turbines. The entire village of Stamford looks out on Hoosac Wind in northern Massachusetts, with 340 foot tall 1.5 MW wind turbines 1.5 miles to the east. Searsburg and Deerfield Wind are to the north. Some of the big Deerfield Wind turbines are visible along Route 8/100 going north from Stamford Village. No town has more experience with industrial wind turbines of numerous different sizes.



The Town of Stamford adopted its most recent Town Plan in 2019. Following the guidance from the Department of Public Service, the Town implemented Act 174 and currently has an approved Enhanced Energy Plan. Stamford's Town Plan contains a specific policy that requiring a 1 kilometer setback from any year-round residential building, and has designated Preferred Sites for appropriate locations of Large-Scale Wind turbines. The Bennington County Regional Plan also contains a 1 kilometer setback for every town within the BCRC.

#### Stamford Town Plan Specific Policy

Larger-scale wind energy development (turbines exceeding 100 KW capacity) must be located at least 1 kilometer from any year-round residential building, adhere to all state

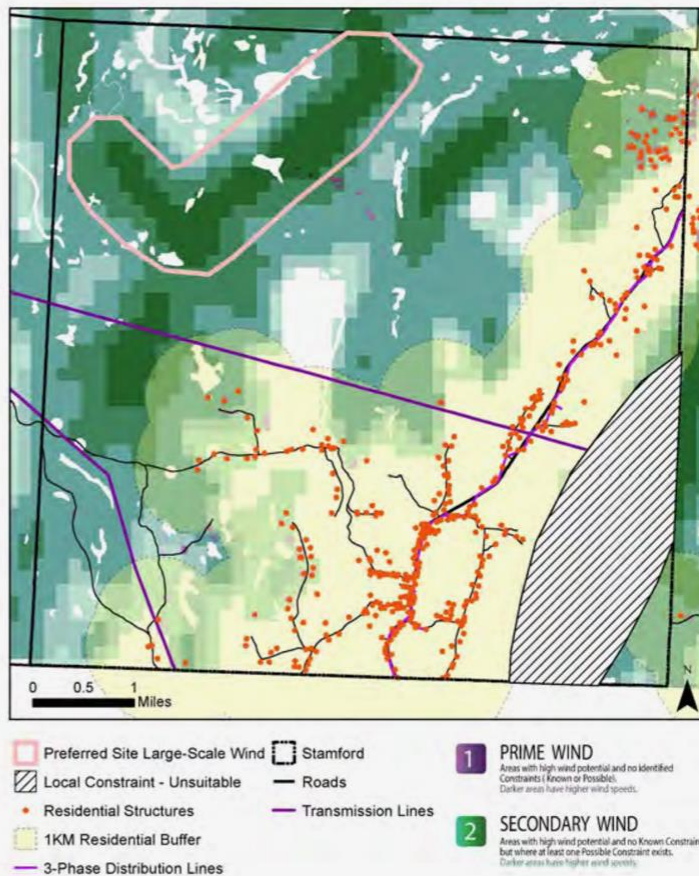
## Stamford Town Plan Preferred Site Map

Figure 10-6. The Wind Energy Resource Map for Stamford illustrates that there is significant potential for wind energy development in Stamford due to topographic conditions and the fact that development is located relatively distant from potential wind energy facilities. Constraints to development are primarily associated with potential impacts to sections of remote forest land in these mountainous areas.

Special care must be taken to limit and mitigate environmental damage in these fragile upland areas.

The amount of development in Stamford should not exceed a reasonable contribution toward regional targets that are based on the LEAP model and state energy goals. Less than half of the 26 MW of future wind energy capacity should be located in Stamford.

The town should actively participate in any Section 248 reviews and require compensation if any site is located in Stamford.



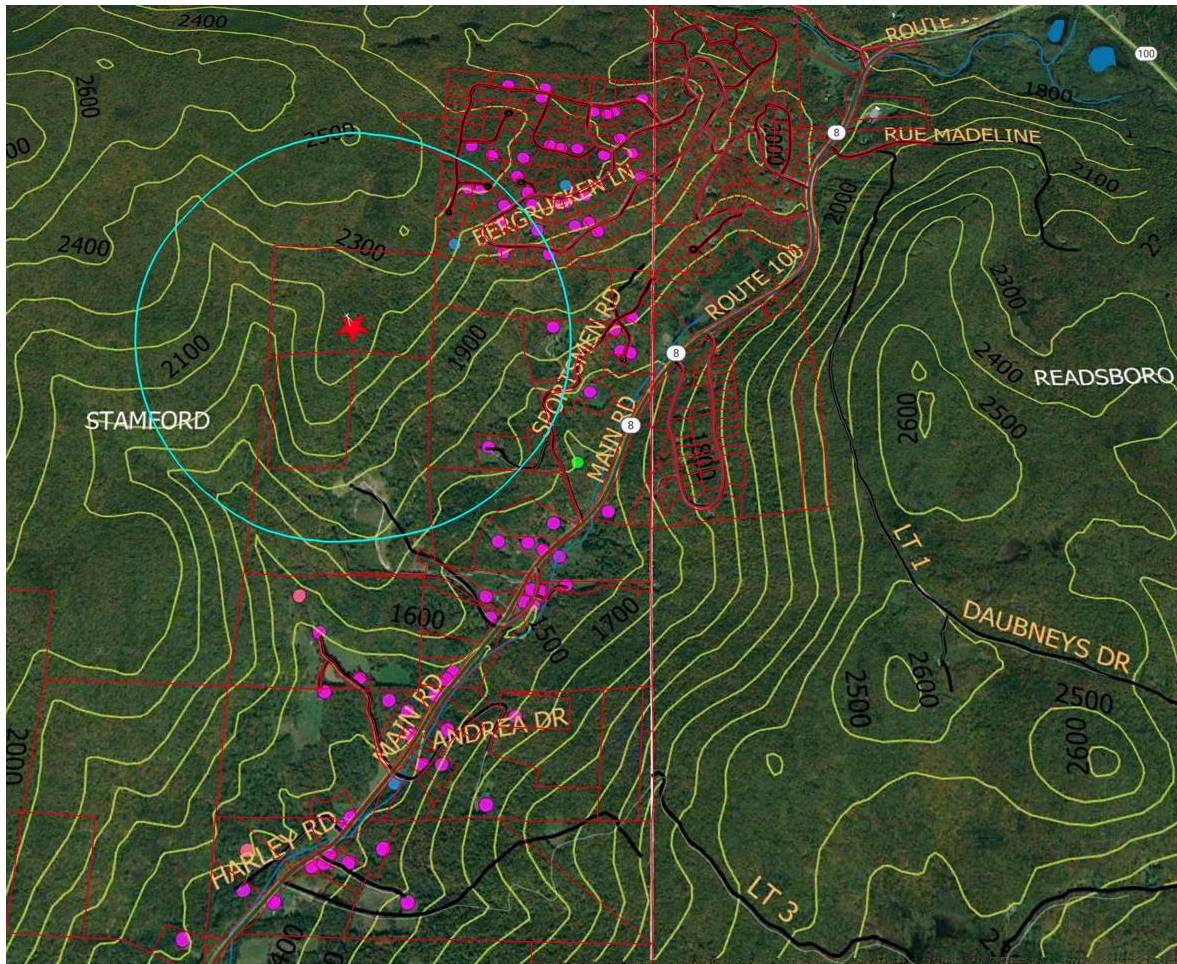
As recently communicated by the Bennington County Regional Commission to the Stamford Planning Commission,

Stamford has an "Enhanced Energy Plan," which means it has been issued a "Determination of Energy Compliance" by the Vermont Department of Public Service. This gives Stamford's plan what is called "substantial deference" by the PUC in its deliberations as to whether to issue a certificate of public good (CPG) for the proposed turbine. The CPG is essentially a permit to proceed. Substantial deference means that Stamford's energy plan policies must be applied by the PUC "unless there is a clear and convincing demonstration that other factors affecting the general good of the State outweigh the application of ... the policy."

BCRC staff did meet with a representative from Norwich Technologies before the advance notice was issued and pointed out that the proposed location for the turbine did not fall in the preferred site area identified in the Stamford Energy Plan and that the site was within 1000 meters of the nearest residence, which the Bennington Regional Energy Plan identifies as an appropriate residential setback for turbines of this scale. Also, the regional energy committee was briefed on the proposal at a recent meeting.

Nevertheless, the developer, Norwich Solar Technologies, has proceeded to issue an Advance Notice for a 2.2 MW Industrial Wind Turbine that received a Standard Offer Contract in the last bidding process. NST has also filed for two different extensions of the Standard Offer Contract Milestone for submitting the Petition, originally due Sept. 1, extended to mid-October and currently due by Dec. 15, as it awaits the interconnection study with National Grid. Apparently the power will go to Massachusetts, though GMP is required by contract to receive the power and RECs. NST has also filed an Advance Notice for a met tower. The numerous cases in ePUC has been particularly confusing to the Town and members of the public who are attempting to follow what is happening and participate at the PUC. I cannot stress how confusing this proposal is, with three different active cases and one closed case in ePUC.

NST has chosen to proceed with a site that does not comply with the Stamford Town Plan, as there are a number of year-round residential buildings within the 1 km setback (turquoise circle in image below). Additionally, there is a development from the 1960s called Alpenwald that extends into Readsboro with more than 500 lots that are likely to experience noise pollution downwind of the site.



3D image showing the wind turbine location and nearby structures.

StuffFor3D  
mfs2.github.io



The area where the wind turbine is proposed is essentially wilderness. It is in a high priority forest block with high priority habitat connectivity. The terrain is in some areas steep and rocky, and will require a one-mile long new road, perhaps with a bridge to get to the wind turbine site. The proposed access road goes through a property that has an active Act 250 enforcement action (which the wind developer is planning to take responsibility for) due to a gravel extraction business on the parcel that has been used for unpermitted activity referred to as “rock crawling” where an extensive trail network was built over the last 7 or more years for Jeeps that crawl over rocks, and overnight camping. The parcel is referred to as Vermont Badlands. See this page for photos of what has been occurring <https://forum.ih8mud.com/threads/6-9-18-vt-badlands.1059873/>. See YouTube “Vermont Badlands” for numerous videos.

The Standard Offer Contract has enabled this 2.2 MW wind turbine and met tower proposal to proceed, with no community outreach in advance, blindsiding the small town of Stamford in July when it was first disclosed, even though the Standard Offer bid was submitted more than a year ago. It is creating tremendous disruption already to the community, taking up time from the Select Board and Planning Commission, raising problems for landowners who are in the midst of sales or planned upgrades or construction of new homes. The Alpenwald development has seen an increase in activity with new homes and sales and all of a sudden people are putting plans on hold. This sort of thing should not be happening in Vermont, especially when the town plan will be given Substantial Deference by the PUC and it is hard to imagine that the general good of the state for one 2.2 MW wind turbine will be found to overrule the carefully crafted and reasonable Enhanced Energy Plan that is part of the Stamford Town Plan.

This is just one example of the type of renewable energy projects that VCE encounters. We have more examples. The way Vermont approaches renewable energy development must be part of the RES update conversation. We cannot afford to disrupt more communities with these poorly-designed projects that exclude the people who live here and ignore specific policies and plans.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider this. Again, here is the link to the video that tells the story of what has happened with Industrial Wind Development in Vermont <https://youtu.be/oYFE1FlyutU>.

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