



California Wind Energy Association

Memorandum

TO: Alameda County Scientific Review Committee
FROM: Nancy Rader, CalWEA Executive Director
SUBJECT: Draft Research Plan for “Improving Methods for Estimating Fatality of Birds and Bats at Wind Energy Facilities in California”
DATE: 6/18/2010

The California Wind Energy Association (CalWEA) submitted, and was subsequently awarded, a grant from the California Energy Commission (CEC) to rigorously evaluate the procedures provided in the California Guidelines for Reducing Impacts to Birds and Bats from Wind Energy Development for estimating mortality of birds and bats associated with collisions with wind turbines in California.

This draft Research Plan lays out the goals of the CalWEA-CEC project and provides a draft experimental design for evaluating and testing approaches for estimating the true bird and bat mortality at a wind facility based on observational evidence of collision mortality. The primary goal of this project is to generate information allowing for the comparison and improvement of existing mortality estimation methods, not only in the Altamont, but throughout California and elsewhere.

This document also outlines the reasons for selecting Altamont Pass WRA as the study site, and describes the precautions the proposed experimental design takes to avoid any significant impacts on the ongoing study. In particular, the document addresses issues with string selection, swamping, impact on the monitoring team schedule, and species selection. We believe that the draft experimental design, to be carried out over approximately 9-11 months, will have no significant impact on the ongoing monitoring efforts or associated analytical results. We are very interested in working closely with the SRC to ensure that our study will provide data useful to the Altamont in particular, and to wind facilities in California in general.

Our study will provide information useful to the ongoing monitoring at the Altamont, including: (1) a comparison of scavenging removal curves to prior studies conducted at the Altamont, (2) estimates of survey error generated under experimental conditions in which the true number of carcasses on the plot is known, (3) insights into the effect of ecological variation and carcass density on survey error, (4) estimates of the dependency of observer error on density and shape of the scavenger removal curve, (5) a comparison of existing and new methods for estimating true mortality which could be used with the Altamont current study data set, (6) and evaluation of variation in scavenging rate, observer error, and their interactions on the overall error in true mortality estimation.

NextEra Energy Resources (the company with the majority of the wind turbines in the APWRA) and the other APWRA wind companies participating in the Alameda County Monitoring Team surveys have agreed to provide space for storing the bird and bat carcasses used in the study, as well as access to their sites.

We look forward to your comments on the Research Plan and hope to work closely with you to generate a useful and interesting study.