

## **NOTES | 10/16/2007 (P64)**

### **Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area Scientific Review Committee Conference Call**

Prepared by the Center for Collaborative Policy  
Reviewed and SRC Final Approval 2/13/08

#### **Agenda Items**

Meeting Summary Approval  
Updates: Rock Piles, FPLE Credit Issued and Behavior Mapping  
American Kestrel & Burrowing Owl Study: Data Gathering and Adding Field Days  
Winter Shutdown

#### **Action Items**

County to send SRC and post on web letter granting FPLE Credit for high risk turbine removal

#### **Meeting Summary Approval**

The SRC approved the following meeting summaries:

[P36 SRC Meeting Notes 7-10-07](#)

[P39 SRC Meeting Notes 7-20-07](#)

[P50 SRC Call Meeting Notes 9/18/07](#)

#### **Rock Piles**

After inquiry by the County with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, moving rock piles is considered less feasible as a management tool because the Service would require authorization to take federally listed species to move the rock piles. Rock piles are potentially occupied by the California tiger salamander, a federally threatened species. Disturbance of rock piles would require either a take permit from the Service pursuant to Section 10 of the federal endangered species act or take authorization pursuant to Section 7 of the federal endangered species act. These processes can be lengthy and would likely lead to additional mitigation to compensate for any potential impacts associated with rock pile removal. Because there are uncertainties regarding the value of rock pile removal to reduce avian mortality, the SRC is not recommending measure for immediate implementation.

#### **FPLE Credit**

The County granted the credit for removing what FPLE considered to be high risk turbines in exchange for Tier 1 and 2 turbine removals. FPLE has removed completely (tower and turbine) the additional string recommended by the SRC, which FPLE agreed to during credit discussions. The County will send a copy of the letter to the SRC and post it on the web.

#### **Behavioral Mapping**

As the SRC suggested, the Monitoring Team is working with Lee Neher to use his maps for establishing observation points for behavioral monitoring. The monitoring program has budgeted the item, but may have to supplement the budget to digitize the data.

## **American Kestrel & Burrowing Owl Study**

The Monitoring Team will not be able to extend the study by one week because the fatality search crew members are not available to continue. Preliminary data indicate that most American kestrel and burrowing owl carcasses are removed by scavengers rapidly and within the 30-day search interval of the primary monitoring study – suggesting that detections of these species during the monitoring study are likely underrepresented. A fresh burrowing owl carcass, from an auto collision, stayed on the ground for 4 days. The MT found a Peregrine Falcon, which is a California endangered species.

One SRC member raised several questions for future discussion:

- How long do the feathers remain?
- Are the carcasses moved from the original location?
- What is the estimated cause of death? Is there any indication of predation or turbine strike (head or wing severed)?
- What is the distance to turbine?

## **Winter Shutdown**

### **History**

In September, the SRC recommended a 4-month winter shutdown in the Altamont Pass. The purpose of this recommendation was to ensure a greater likelihood of achieving the 50% reduction in mortality as required under the Settlement Agreement. Preliminary data suggest that the current two-month cross-over shutdown along with other implemented measures (e.g., Tier 1 and 2 turbine removal and relocation) is insufficient to achieve this goal. The settling parties are discussing the 4-month shutdown recommendation. The wind energy companies appear to be more open to the 2-month universal shutdown and accelerating Tier 3 turbine removal.

On Oct. 10, the SRC met with the settling parties and held a question and answer session. The SRC directed the monitoring team to coordinate directly with the companies to synchronize the shutdown so searches would immediately precede shutdown, thus avoiding lag between shutdown and search and improving data.

The monitoring team also suggested a 2-month Altamont-wide phased shutdown citing lack of impact on annual mortality of the cross-over designed shutdown with 2-months on and 2-months off. The SRC clarified that no one has assessed the change in annual mortality although the cross-over design did indicate a treatment effect. As noted, the SRC is concerned that the 2-month shutdown is not enough to achieve the 50% reduction in mortality required under the Settlement Agreement by Nov. 2009.

### **SRC Discussion of Universal Shutdown**

The SRC debated the 2-month universal shutdown proposed by the monitoring team and the benefit of the universal shutdown versus the cross-over design. In the absence of other measures that would provide a reasonable level of confidence that the 50% reduction would be achieved, the SRC decided to stay with its recommendation for a 4-month winter shutdown. Whether the companies are directed to initiate a 2- or 4-month shutdown, the SRC recommended that a phased shutdown be initiated as soon as possible to improve the quality of the data. While the SRC realizes that reduced mortality may be indicated in the cross-over design, the SRC did not want to recommend a 2-month shutdown with a cross-over design because preliminary data

indicate that it is insufficient to achieve the 50% reduction and it undermines the SRC recommendation for a 4-month shutdown.

## **Other Monitoring Team Questions to the SRC**

### **Two-Month Universal Shutdown**

- 1) Should we shutdown the first 2 months of winter (Nov-Dec)?
  - The shutdown should start as soon as possible.
  - The shutdown should be synchronized with monitoring.
- 2) Can we wait until Nov. 1 (for the Kestrel and Burrowing Owl team) if only 2 months shutdown is requested?
  - Phase around the Kestrel & Burrowing Owl study as much as possible.
- 3) What is the appropriate strategy for non-plot (non-monitored) turbines?
  - Turn them all off at the same time on Nov 1. Then turn them all on at the same time.
  - Re-start March 1.
  - Phasing takes 1 month.

### **Cross Over Shutdown**

- 1) If a cross-over design moves forward, which area, north or south, is shutdown first this time?
  - Doesn't matter, flip a coin.
- 2) Our search plots will have a phased shutdown, what about the rest of the turbines?
  - Turn them off on Nov 1
- 3) What to do about correcting long September sampling interval?
  - Go back to the 30-day search, which would lead to an extra survey. Try to get the Kestrel & Burrowing Owl team to stay.

### **Public Comment**

Janice Gan: If 4-month shutdown is the recommendation, nothing will happen unless the settling parties are in agreement.

Bill Damon: AWI hasn't made a commitment on any of this. We are not in favor of the 4-month shutdown. AWI is not part of the settling party discussion so AWI is listening to the SRC meetings.

## **Additional Golden Eagles Found**

The monitoring team has identified 39 additional eagles in the Wildlife Reporting and Response System. The MT can use these data once the data go through quality control.

## **Notes on P59 Meeting Notes from 9/24/07**

There was a question about the meeting notes. One member thought that the SRC had voted to approve the AWI's exemption from the winter shutdown along with the black blade painting study design. Other members disagreed and re-affirmed that they do not support the exemption. Facilitator Gina Bartlett will revise the meeting notes to clarify this and re-send them for SRC review.

ADD A STATEMENT: The SRC approved the study design, but did not vote on the exemption from the wintertime shutdown.

## **AWI Black Blade Painting Sample**

The SRC briefly discussed that AWI is proposing to include turbines only from the south side of the Altamont. One member expressed concern that this would not constitute a random sample or that randomness would be decreased. Another member suggested that the assignment to treatment versus control is the randomization. Another expressed concern that differences between north and south could lead to confounded results if the study was only conducted in the south. Another member thought confining the sample to the south could control for spatial variation. Another suggested that if there is more mortality in the north, having the study in the south might be less preferable. The SRC ultimately deferred this conversation until AWI submits a detailed study plan for review.

## **Meeting Participants**

### **SRC**

Joanna Burger  
Jim Estep  
Sue Orloff  
Shawn Smallwood  
Julie Yee

### **Identified Members of Public**

David Cleary  
John Mormon  
Emery Ergas  
Janice Gan  
Joan Stewart

### **Monitoring Team**

Brian Latta  
Brian Karas

Facilitator Gina Bartlett, Center for Collaborative Policy