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Schnure: Public welcome at wind site

By Dorothy Schnure

Commentary

I'd like to invite the public on a real tour of Kingdom Community Wind in Lowell. This educational tour is not the pretend walk Mr. Lindholm references in his Aug. 14 commentary piece. These tours take place each summer from June through August and are open to the public. The tours are informational and intended to share facts and data about the project and allow the public — supporters and skeptics of wind energy alike — the opportunity to witness them up close, and learn more about how wind generates power that is fed to the grid and used to power homes and businesses.

Lindholm is an ardent opponent to wind energy, and we very much appreciate the opportunity to set the record straight and correct the many inaccuracies contained in his piece.

Since Kingdom Community Wind began operating in Lowell in 2012, it has generated enough energy each year for more than 24,000 homes, is performing above expectations, and is one of the reasons GMP has kept rates low and stable for customers. We not only met requirements to ensure the plant would be in the public interest, but in many areas we exceeded them, such as putting 2,800 acres of land in conservation easements. And, after construction was completed, 35 acres of land has been revegetated, with GMP planting more than 3,000 trees in addition to natural regrowth.

Perhaps the most egregious claim Lindholm makes is his suggestion regarding blasting at the site. The contractors for the project had a detailed plan using accepted industry practice that was reviewed and approved by the Agency of Natural Resources. There is no ongoing concern at the site due to blasting. Some publications have published a photo Lindholm claims shows pollutants from blasting. In fact, the photo shows naturally occurring seepage after passing through soil and rock fill material and being exposed to oxygen, resulting in iron-rich precipitates. This can happen naturally or as a result of construction. We have identified some minor areas of iron seep, but they are not impacting water quality of streams flowing off the mountain.

Contrary to Lindholm's assertions, the stormwater systems we have in place to protect the hydrology of the area are performing well, as proven by regular monitoring and reporting by trained professional and state inspections. Recent tests of nearby waters show no impact to water quality as a result of the project. In addition to protecting water purity with state-of-the-art stormwater systems, not only did we minimize any impact to wetlands (less than 0.10 acre of wetlands was affected by construction of the project), we are restoring and monitoring significant wetlands that were affected by prior logging activities on the mountain.

Lindholm calls for officials to walk the site. He may be surprised to learn that more than 5,000 members of the public have visited the site on summer tours since it began operating, and their response has been overwhelmingly enthusiastic and appreciative for the care with which we built and operate the project. In addition, regulators and government officials have done official walkthroughs, in addition to visits by the media.

We are committed to being good neighbors with the town of Lowell and with neighboring communities, and have appreciated Lowell's overwhelming support for Kingdom Community Wind. Each year, we share in the success of the project with those communities by making good-neighbor payments, which some towns have used to lower municipal taxes and install their own clean energy systems. This year, payments to Albany, Craftsbury, Eden, Westfield and Irasburg totaled \$201,000.

We believe the best way for people to understand the good work we have done at Kingdom Community Wind is to visit the site and see it for yourself. That's why we offer summer tours. We still have openings left this summer and encourage people to sign up at www.greenmountainpower.com. We hope to see you there.

Dorothy Schnure is a spokeswoman for Green Mountain Power.
