

Conservation Council of North Carolina • Environmental Defense Fund •  
Environment North Carolina • North Carolina Conservation Network •  
North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association • Southern Alliance for Clean Energy •  
Western North Carolina Alliance

July 15, 2009

Dear Senator:

We write to urge you to restore Senate Bill 1068, Permitting of Wind Energy Facilities, to its original form. As introduced, SB 1068 would have ensured responsible wind power development in our mountains and our coast. Unfortunately, the version before you effectively bans wind power in Western North Carolina, a step in the wrong direction.

**Clean, Renewable Wind Power Can Be Developed Responsibly.** Wind power is a free, clean, renewable resource that can decrease the state's dependence on dirty energy sources, help fulfill the goals of the state's renewable electricity standard, and boost our economy. As such, we support the establishment of a permitting process that will ensure that wind projects are developed appropriately—without marring the state's scenic beauty and unique ecology or countering the will of local communities.

Section 3 of S 1068, along with current law, prohibits wind power development in National Parks such as the Great Smoky Mountains, Blue Ridge Parkway and Appalachian Trail; in federal wilderness areas; in State Parks such as Grandfather Mountain; and in Natural Significant Heritage Areas, wildlife refuge areas, and private conservation lands with high recreation values. Critically, the original bill also prohibited wind development in the associated “viewsheds” of these precious natural areas.

Due in part to the large amount of protected state and federal lands in Western North Carolina, an analysis from La Capra Associates estimated that wind turbines could be sited on only 5 percent of the state's ridgelines. Other analyses have excluded more ridgelines because they are too far from existing roads and transmission lines.

**Responsible Wind in WNC is Critical to the State's Energy Future.** Wind power on just five percent of our ridges could create, conservatively, 800 megawatts of capacity—enough to power over 400,000 homes. This figure represents two-thirds of North Carolina's land-based wind potential, and 20 percent of the renewable energy required under North Carolina's renewable energy standard.

We can develop wind in Western North Carolina without marring the region's environment, and we must. We know of no other state that has categorically banned wind development, and urge you not to close the door on wind power in the state's mountains.