

 <p>Green Mountain National Forest</p>	 <p>Finger Lakes National Forest</p>	<p>Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forests</p> <p><b><i>For Immediate Release</i></b></p> <p>Tuesday, January 3, 2012</p>
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## US Forest Service approves Vermont wind power facility

**RUTLAND, VT.** -- The U.S. Forest Service has approved the construction of a 15-turbine wind energy facility on the Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont today, which will provide enough electricity to power about 13,000 homes annually.

Today’s announcement marks the culmination of an environmental analysis and record of decision for the proposal to construct and operate a commercially viable, utility-scale wind energy facility on the national forest in the towns of Searsburg, and Readsboro next to the Searsburg Wind Facility operated by Green Mountain Power Company on private land. Green Mountain Forest Supervisor Colleen Madrid decided to approve “Alternative 2” (reduced west).

“This permit will bring more jobs and renewable power to the people of Vermont,” said US Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell. “The project’s selection on the White House Dashboard brought newfound efficiencies to our review process, enabling us to complete our environmental impact statement more expeditiously. We also were given a great opportunity to learn valuable lessons for future wind energy facilities on other National Forest lands around the country.”

The facility will consist of 15 state-of-the-art 2.0 megawatt turbines that will stand 389 feet tall, from the ground to blade tip. The turbines are expected to produce approximately 92,506 MWh with a nameplate capacity of 30 megawatts.

The Green Mountain National Forest accepted the formal application from Deerfield Wind, LLC, owned by Iberdrola Renewables, in November 2004. For projects of this magnitude, the Forest Service is required to conduct a National Environmental Policy Act review process, which includes in-depth analysis, scientific studies, and public participation. The environmental impact statement and record of decision – which address various impacts and public concerns that have been raised -- can be viewed at: <http://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/fs-usda-pop.php?project=7838>

The Forest Service began the NEPA process for the proposal in July 2005. A similarly required state review process conducted by the Vermont Public Service Board formally began in 2007. The board concluded its review in July 2009, with a decision to approve construction and operation of a 15-turbine configuration, subject to specific conditions. Three other alternatives were considered through the federal NEPA process including:

- The original proposal presented by the applicant, known as the Proposed Action, was to construct 17 state-of-the-art 2.0 megawatts turbines. Ten turbines would have been constructed on the west ridge and seven would have been constructed on the east ridge, adjacent to the existing Searsburg Wind Facility. The anticipated annual electricity generation for this alternative would have been approximately 99,776 MWh, with a total nameplate capacity of 34 megawatts, enough to meet the annual needs of 14,000 average homes.
- The other alternative, known as Alternative 3, would have built 7 turbines on the east ridge and no turbines on the west ridge. This alternative would produce approximately 41,084 MWh, with a nameplate capacity of 14 megawatts, enough to meet the annual needs of about 5,800 average homes.
- A “No Action” alternative, which is required by law and federal regulation.

The U.S. Forest Service is authorized to issue special use permits to individuals and businesses for certain uses and activities. The Agency intends to allow the project to proceed by issuing one special use permit to Deerfield Wind, LLC to use up to 80 acres of National Forest System land. A second special use permit will be issued to Central Vermont Public Service to facilitate the distribution of the power generated by the project over the transmission lines that it currently owns.

A public notice of availability for the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision will appear in the *Federal Register* in early January. A legal notice announcing the documents and decision will be published shortly after in the *Rutland Herald*, which is the forest’s official newspaper of record. Once the legal notice has been published, a mandatory 45-day administrative appeal period will begin.

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