

SDAS Position Statement on Proposed San Diego County Wind Farms

The San Diego Audubon Society (SDAS) supports the development of wind energy in principle. We recognize it to be a relatively non-polluting form of renewable energy that can help address the problems of foreign oil dependency and global climate change.

However, we will not support proposed wind farm sites that are within, adjacent to, or will adversely affect, state or federal natural areas, wildlife preserves, significant habitat or floristic areas, important cultural sites, avian flyways, or undeveloped or roadless areas of significant scenic, recreational, or natural resource value.

In light of the above, SDAS cannot support currently proposed wind farm developments within San Diego County in the McCain Valley, Table Mountain, or Banner Canyon areas, as they involve one or more of the characteristics outlined in the preceding paragraph. We hope more appropriate sites can be identified for these proposed developments.

In general, we are particularly concerned about the potential of wind farms to inflict high levels of mortality on raptors and other birdlife, and also bats, as has been well documented at such locations as Altamont Pass. Local proposals must, as part of their Environmental Impact Statements, specify how bird and bat deaths will be avoided (not mitigated, but avoided).

We endorse the provision adopted at Altamont Pass of shutting down machines at times of high bird or bat activity. A similar provision should be incorporated into San Diego County wind farm proposals.

As part of the above, we strongly urge that bird and bat activity in the vicinity of any proposed wind farm start to be studied and monitored at the same time that any wind speed test towers are constructed at that site, including adverse effects of the test towers themselves. Since most passerines migrate at night, and owls and bats are active at night, night monitoring (including radar studies), should be made in an active manner, that is, the observer should be moving through the count area so as to better record reclusive species throughout the potential wind farm location. There should be adequate and strategically selected observation times so that species that use the area for a short migratory period, but in large numbers, will be identified. There should also be life-of-project monitoring of bird, bat, or sensitive insect fatalities, with mandatory shut-downs required if significant problems occur.