

SDAS Position Statement on Proposed San Diego County Wind Farms
Updated January 29, 2010

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 that are sited within, adjacent to, or will adversely affect, state or federal natural areas, wildlife preserves, significant habitat or floristic areas, important cultural or religious sites, or undeveloped or roadless areas of particular beauty, recreational, or resource value.

In light of the above, SDAS cannot support current, or recently 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 projects.

In general, we are particularly concerned about the potential of wind farms to inflict high levels of mortality on birdlife (especially raptors) and bats. This problem 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. There should also be life-of-project monitoring of bird/bat fatalities, with mandatory shut-downs required if significant problems occur.

As part of the above, we strongly urge that bird and bat monitoring in the vicinity of any proposed wind farm commence at the same time that any wind speed ("Met") towers are built at that site, including monitoring of adverse effects of the test towers themselves. Since most passerines migrate at night, night monitoring (including radar studies) should be included. Field personnel should actively move through the area (not just sit in one location) to better record reclusive species.

Additionally, the number of wind turbines now being proposed for the County (and immediately south of it) is sufficiently large that cumulative impact studies need to be carried out to predict the combined effect of all these projects.

Thank you for your attention to these recommendations.

For the San Diego Audubon Society



James A. Peugh
Conservation Committee Chair