

Testimony by Sally Collopy on March 22 to the House Fish, Wildlife & Water Resources Committee

I'm Sally Collopy and my husband Bruce and I live on Fairfield Pond. We've been running the lake association there for 16 years. As you well know water quality is a serious issue in Vermont that we've spent millions of dollars on. Fairfield Pond had a high phosphorus count for many years, in the high 20s. We've worked very hard through education and had reduced our numbers to 14-15(ug/l). It had been stable for a few years until the Shoreland Protection Act was put in place. The fear of the SPA caused much clear-cutting around the state, including Fairfield Pond. We believe this gutting directly caused a spike in phosphorus back to 21-23 for the past few years. As you know this will take years to recover from.

Imagine our concern when we heard about the proposed industrial wind turbines to be placed on Rocky Ridge in Swanton, above Fairfield Pond. For 26 years I worked with Vermont Local Roads. In this capacity and through the lake association we preached the bible of the EPA, ANR, & DEC. We didn't always agree with the decisions, but respected that the State cared so much about our environment. Imagine our shock thinking that this amazing habitat would be gutted and filled with stone, concrete and highway sized roads. This habitat is considered the highest value habitat block in the NW region. It's reported that 95% of stormwater runoff from this proposed project would drain into the St. Albans and Missisquoi Bay area, the highest priority for clean up with a goal of 65% reduction in TMDL. The remaining 5% into Fairfield Pond. You can also imagine the comments received from residents around the pond. How can you ask people to respect the SPA and the 250' protected shoreland area from the water on their property then clear cut the ridge directly above the pond. The SPA will become a completely meaningless law on Fairfield Pond and anywhere else around the state where industrial scale projects are proposed around our lakes and ponds.

This ridge is rich with beaver ponds, wetlands, vernal pool and peat bogs, so important to managing stormwater runoff and reducing our carbon footprint and protecting our downstream water bodies. The mere thought of removing this amazing habitat contradicts completely with everything the very agencies created to protect it stand for. The EPA stresses that impervious surfaces account for 14% of the lake's phosphorus loads and are linked to toxic algae blooms and aquatic habitat degradation. We have had this on Fairfield Pond the last few years. The DEC outlines this type of development as "stressors" under the Surface Water Management Strategies. They discuss encroachment and channel erosion as causing long-term (>25 year recovery time) impacts that are very costly to repair.

The EPA said in their news release announcing the public meetings last summer. "The greatest threat to a healthy Lake Champlain is phosphorus pollution caused by stormwater runoff, nonpoint source pollution and erosion. Excess phosphorus can cause algae blooms, which disrupt fishing and other recreational uses, threaten drinking water supplies, lead to decreased property values, and pose threats to animal and human health. Phosphorus pollution also harms local streams and rivers that feed into Lake Champlain."

And how can we trust the developer, the utility and ANR to enforce their permit conditions. As Geoff Goll just outlined what happened at GMP's Lowell Kingdom Community Wind project. The system is broken and stacked against homeowners, municipalities and people who do care about our environment, and for years that hasn't been our environmental agencies.

Fairfield Pond is also rich with a variety of nature. This area is a main migratory route for waterfowl, everyone knows this! We have osprey and eagles, including juveniles. There are heron and raptors. Loons have tried to nest for 2 years. Many times we've witnessed them fly directly south or southwest over the ridge right into the location of where the turbines would be. Bats are finally returning as witnessed in ANRs report. Why would we risk harming this amazing ecosystem?

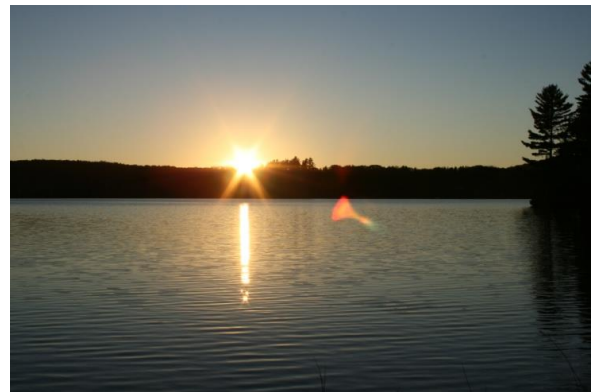
It is imperative we stay the development on industrial wind in Vermont pending a thorough, systematic study of the stormwater systems at Lowell, Sheffield and Georgia Mountain and all environmental consequences based on such factors as topography, geology, and other impacts to watersheds and our precious aquatic resources. We must not compromise the long fought, expensive gains related to improving Lake Champlain. Mountain top removal will only exacerbate serious environmental water quality problems and in the Swanton Wind case, 95% of stormwater runoff going into the main priority area for clean up.

Sincerely, Sally Collopy

Current photos of Rocky Ridge, Swanton Industrial Wind site.
We can choose this to SAVE our rivers, streams, ponds, and Lake Champlain.



Or we can choose this!
Lowell & Sheffield Mountain Photos.
Which one protects water quality more?



Fairfield Pond presently, above right, and future, above left and below.

Please protect this amazing recreational habitat! Sound is greatly amplified over water. Shadow flicker is intensified. Prevent stormwater runoff. Fairfield Pond received almost 12 inches of rain in June and 8.75" in July. This amazing body of water will never be the same!



Sep-13-2015 03:20 AM

ducks after leaving dock



Eagle flying southwest over ridge

Sep-13-2015 03:14 AM



Sep-15-2015 03:26 AM

Eagle eating fish, took off westward over



across driveway, in outlet

Aug-13-2015 07:22 PM



across driveway, in outlet

Aug-07-2015 06:29 AM



Four loons - 2nd year trying to nest

Aug-07-2015 06:52 AM



Sep-13-2015 03:06 AM

loon raft - tried nesting two years - hope this helps