

UPDATING ACT 250

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, FISH, AND WILDLIFE
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AGENDA

- About Energize Vermont
- Energize Vermont's Climate Action Project and Act 250
- Support for Strengthening Act 250
- Concerns
 - Mitigation Options
 - Cumulative Impacts
 - Energy Siting
- Recommendations



ENERGIZE VERMONT

- Promotes sensible energy and climate policies that protect our environment and respect our communities.
- Established in 2010 in order to
 - Educate Vermonters about the social, economic, and environmental costs of large scale renewable energy projects
 - Offer alternatives to the industrial wind energy projects that were being proposed for Vermont's most sensitive, high-elevation
- Volunteer organization with members across Vermont



ENERGIZE VERMONT'S CLIMATE ACTION PROJECT

- Sensible climate action for Vermonters in five steps:
 1. Protect the natural resources that defend Vermont from the effects of climate change
 2. Support strong and resilient local communities
 3. Change the ways we use energy
 4. Change the ways we produce energy
 5. Consider the climate impacts of lifestyle choices
- Our core principle is respect for:
 - The environment
 - Sound economics
 - Community values



ACT 250 AND CLIMATE CHANGE

- Energize Vermont supports adding measures to Act 250 to reduce energy consumption
- But, Vermonters have relied upon Act 250 for decades to protect our irreplaceable natural resources
- And protecting those natural resources is by far the most important element of Vermont's response to climate change



ENERGIZE VERMONT SUPPORTS UPDATING ACT 250

In particular, Energize Vermont supports those provisions that would:

- Address climate change, enable climate adaptation, and reduce emissions
- Protect forest blocks and connecting habitat
- Reduce elevation threshold to 2,000 feet or 1,500 feet
- Repeal exemptions



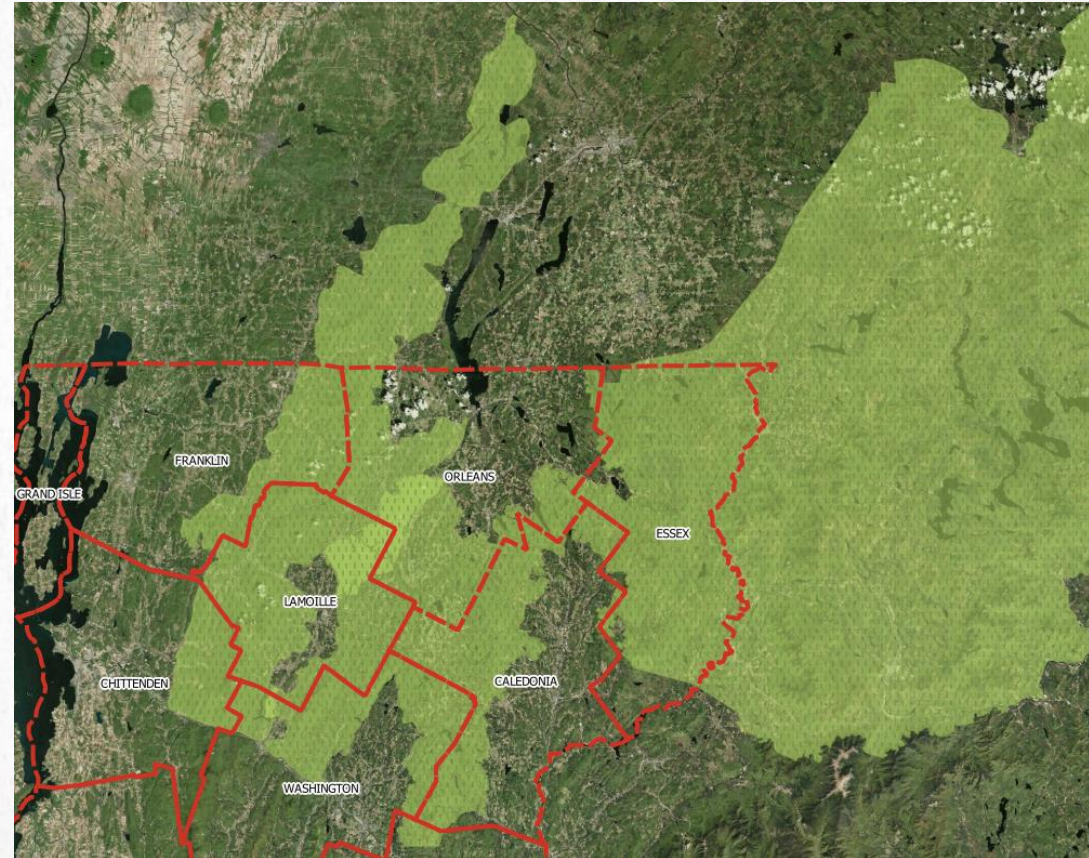
CONCERNS

- Mitigating environmental degradation through cash payments and land swaps degrades the environment
 - Our environment cannot be for sale
 - Land swaps almost always result in the degradation of highly valued land in exchange for protection of low value land
 - Lowell
 - Deerfield
- How do we account for cumulative impacts?
- Energy development is degrading our environment far beyond its ability to impact greenhouse gas emissions



CUMULATIVE IMPACTS ON VERMONT'S FOREST BLOCKS

- The international Staying Connected Initiative seeks to conserve, restore, and enhance landscape connectivity
- Sustaining connectivity safeguards native wildlife and plants from the impacts of habitat fragmentation and climate change
- The lands identified by Staying Connected are identified by ANR as Vermont's highest priority forest blocks





ENORMOUS POTENTIAL FOR CUMULATIVE IMPACT

- Note the chokepoint in the Staying Connected linkage
- The Sheffield and Lowell wind projects have narrowed the linkage
- Other proposed projects would have closed it off completely
- A turbine here, a turbine there, **and pretty soon there's no linkage and nothing to link**





RECOMMENDATIONS

- Eliminate the use of cash to buy an Act 250 permit for environmentally unsound development
- If we must retain land swaps, then *require larger tracts of higher valued land* to be preserved
- Place energy siting under the jurisdiction of Act 250



ENERGY SITING UNDER ACT 250?

- Technical issues like pricing, economic benefit, grid impacts, etc. would still be regulated by PUC—that’s what it is good at; it is not good at land-use regulation
- Today’s energy projects are land-intensive; their siting should be under Act 250
 - Vermont has decades of experience regulating land-use with Act 250
 - Vermonters deserve to have siting decisions made by land-use experts
 - Act 250 proceedings are accessible to ordinary Vermonters
 - Act 250 commissions are attuned to local sensibilities; they know a “clear, written community standard” when they see one
- Placing energy siting under Act 250 would ensure that new Act 250 provisions can be applied across the board
- Act 250 would be more effective at avoiding undue adverse cumulative impacts



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Photo: Moose Family in Fall by Roger Irwin