

## **PRE-CONSTRUCTION EVALUATION OF PROPOSED WIND POWER DEVELOPMENTS**

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Montana has a rich wind resource which could be potentially developed if transmission capability issues are resolved. Wind energy is promoted as a 'green alternative' to traditional sources such as fossil fuels and hydro. However, there is potential for impacts to locally breeding and migrating birds through collisions with turbines, and increased fragmentation of habitat. Pursuant to USDI Fish and Wildlife Service guidelines, a pre-development site evaluation should be conducted at all potential wind sites, to determine if wind power development is likely to cause avian (bird or bat) impacts at levels of concern. Working with agency,

academic and industry personnel, we have developed a Potential Impact Index (PII) to evaluate sites proposed for wind power development. The index incorporates physical attributes, species occurrence, and ecological characteristics to assess the potential for wildlife impacts by wind power development before construction. This presentation will include a discussion of the potential impacts of wind power development on birds, explanation of the PII, and its application to pre-construction studies in Montana.