

Maine Revised Statutes
Title 35-A: PUBLIC UTILITIES
Chapter 34-A: EXPEDITED PERMITTING OF
GRID-SCALE WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

§3452. DETERMINATION OF EFFECT ON SCENIC CHARACTER AND RELATED EXISTING USES

1. Application of standard. In making findings regarding the effect of an expedited wind energy development on scenic character and existing uses related to scenic character pursuant to Title 12, section 685-B, subsection 4 or Title 38, section 484, subsection 3 or section 480-D, the primary siting authority shall determine, in the manner provided in subsection 3, whether the development significantly compromises views from a scenic resource of state or national significance such that the development has an unreasonable adverse effect on the scenic character or existing uses related to scenic character of the scenic resource of state or national significance. Except as otherwise provided in subsection 2, determination that a wind energy development fits harmoniously into the existing natural environment in terms of potential effects on scenic character and existing uses related to scenic character is not required for approval under either Title 12, section 685-B, subsection 4, paragraph C or Title 38, section 484, subsection 3.

[2007, c. 661, Pt. A, §7 (NEW) .]

2. Exception; certain associated facilities. The primary siting authority shall evaluate the effect of associated facilities of a wind energy development in terms of potential effects on scenic character and existing uses related to scenic character in accordance with Title 12, section 685-B, subsection 4, paragraph C or Title 38, section 484, subsection 3, in the manner provided for development other than wind energy development, if the primary siting authority determines that application of the standard in subsection 1 to the development may result in unreasonable adverse effects due to the scope, scale, location or other characteristics of the associated facilities. An interested party may submit information regarding this determination to the primary siting authority for its consideration. The primary siting authority shall make a determination pursuant to this subsection within 30 days of its acceptance of the application as complete for processing.

[2007, c. 661, Pt. A, §7 (NEW) .]

3. Evaluation criteria. In making its determination pursuant to subsection 1, and in determining whether an applicant for an expedited wind energy development must provide a visual impact assessment in accordance with subsection 4, the primary siting authority shall consider:

- A. The significance of the potentially affected scenic resource of state or national significance; [2007, c. 661, Pt. A, §7 (NEW) .]
- B. The existing character of the surrounding area; [2007, c. 661, Pt. A, §7 (NEW) .]
- C. The expectations of the typical viewer; [2007, c. 661, Pt. A, §7 (NEW) .]
- D. The expedited wind energy development's purpose and the context of the proposed activity; [2007, c. 661, Pt. A, §7 (NEW) .]
- E. The extent, nature and duration of potentially affected public uses of the scenic resource of state or national significance and the potential effect of the generating facilities' presence on the public's continued use and enjoyment of the scenic resource of state or national significance; and [2007, c. 661, Pt. A, §7 (NEW) .]

F. The scope and scale of the potential effect of views of the generating facilities on the scenic resource of state or national significance, including but not limited to issues related to the number and extent of turbines visible from the scenic resource of state or national significance, the distance from the scenic resource of state or national significance and the effect of prominent features of the development on the landscape. [2007, c. 661, Pt. A, §7 (NEW).]

In applying these criteria, the primary siting authority shall consider the primary impact and the cumulative scenic impact or effect of the development during both day and night on scenic resources of state or national significance. In evaluating cumulative scenic impact or effect associated with sequential observation, the department shall consider, in addition to the criteria in this subsection, the distance between viewpoints on the linear route and other forms of development along the linear route that effect the expectation of the user of the scenic resource of state or national significance. A finding by the primary siting authority that the development's generating facilities are a highly visible feature in the landscape is not a solely sufficient basis for determination that an expedited wind energy project has an unreasonable adverse effect on the scenic character and existing uses related to scenic character of a scenic resource of state or national significance. In making its determination under subsection 1, the primary siting authority shall consider insignificant the effects of portions of the development's generating facilities located more than 8 miles, measured horizontally, from a scenic resource of state or national significance.

[2015, c. 190, §4 (AMD) .]

4. Visual impact assessment; rebuttable presumption. An applicant for an expedited wind energy development shall provide the primary siting authority with a visual impact assessment of the development that addresses the evaluation criteria in subsection 3 if the primary siting authority determines such an assessment is necessary in accordance with subsection 3. There is a rebuttable presumption that a visual impact assessment is not required for those portions of the development's generating facilities that are located more than 3 miles, measured horizontally, from a scenic resource of state or national significance. The primary siting authority may require a visual impact assessment for portions of the development's generating facilities located more than 3 miles and up to 8 miles from a scenic resource of state or national significance if it finds there is substantial evidence that a visual impact assessment is needed to determine if there is the potential for significant adverse effects on the scenic resource of state or national significance. Information intended to rebut the presumption must be submitted to the primary siting authority by any interested person within 30 days of acceptance of the application as complete for processing. The primary siting authority shall determine if the presumption is rebutted based on a preponderance of evidence in the record.

[2007, c. 661, Pt. A, §7 (NEW) .]

SECTION HISTORY

2007, c. 661, Pt. A, §7 (NEW). 2015, c. 190, §4 (AMD).

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