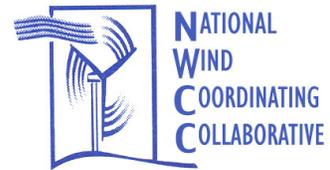


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Study Underway on the Effects of Wind Power on Prairie-Chicken Demography and Population Genetics

WASHINGTON, DC, (July 30, 2007) – The first full season of a 4-year collaborative research project to study the Effects of Wind Power on the Demography and Population Genetics of the Greater Prairie-Chicken is now underway. This research is directed by principal investigators Drs. Brett Sandercock and Samantha Wisely, Kansas State University, and overseen by a subgroup of the National Wind Coordinating Collaborative (NWCC), the Grassland and Shrub Steppe Species Collaborative (GS3C).

The Greater Prairie-Chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*), a species whose population signals the overall health of grassland ecosystems, is found in Kansas, Oklahoma, and other parts of the Great Plains. Of interest to hunters, naturalists, and ranch owners, Greater Prairie-Chickens are considered sensitive to habitat disturbance because of their large home ranges and because population reductions and loss of genetic diversity are known to undermine their reproduction potential. Understanding how development of wind energy resources may impact the population viability of this species of conservation concern – and what strategies may be used to mitigate any impacts identified – is critical to future development of the wind energy resource in prairie ecosystems.

The Grassland and Shrub Steppe Species Collaborative (GS3C), a subgroup of the NWCC Wildlife Workgroup, brings together representatives from state and federal agencies, private industry, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations in a collaborative effort to: 1) identify critical research questions; 2) secure and administer cooperative funding to conduct research; 3) encourage peer-reviewed collaborative research; and 4) identify both potential impacts and mitigation strategies to address any impacts.

The research is being conducted at sites in Clay, Cloud, Cowley, Elk, Geary, Ottawa, Riley, and Wabaunsee counties in Kansas on land where wind energy projects are proposed and on control sites where development is not planned; the experimental and control sites are currently undisturbed prairie rangeland. This venture is an important collaborative scientific inquiry to establish whether there are effects from wind structures to prairie chickens in the Midwest. To determine whether there are impacts, KSU researchers initially captured 296 prairie-chickens (203 males, 94 females) and fitted 91 females with radio transmitters to observe movement patterns and reproductive success.

In April 2007, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation awarded grant funds to this project. Other contributors include wind energy developers BP Alternative Energy, FPL Energy, Horizon Wind Energy, and PPM Energy; the Kansas and Oklahoma offices of The Nature Conservancy; the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks; and the U.S. Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The total project budget is just over \$890,000. In addition, wind developers BP Alternative Energy, Horizon Wind Energy, and Iberdrola Renewable Energies (formerly Competitive Power Ventures) have granted researcher access to three proposed wind sites.

“PPM Energy wants to develop wind energy in a way that protects the environments around our projects,” explains Wind Permitting Director Andy Linehan. “In the Great Plains, we know that there’s a question about the effects of wind projects on grassland birds like prairie-chickens, so we’re investing the time and money to make sure we understand the issue.”

Wayne Walker, Director of Project Development at Horizon Wind Energy remarked, “Horizon Wind believes that wind energy must be developed in a responsible and progressive manner that moves towards achieving a sustainable domestic energy supply while protecting local ecological resources. We are proud to cosponsor the NWCC’s Greater Prairie-Chicken collaborative research, conducted by KSU.”

“Without scientifically rigorous information about wind energy's impacts -- or the lack thereof -- on grassland birds, we risk acquiescing to development in areas that could suffer serious ecological damage from the presence of wind turbines,” says Rob Manes of The Nature Conservancy’s Kansas Office. “Conversely, we may also risk forfeiting climate change mitigation and other ecological benefits of wind energy by unnecessarily resisting wind power development where it is ecologically compatible.”

“This collaborative research effort is unique,” contends Dr. Robert Robel, an expert on prairie-chicken populations. “Very seldom do you see developers, wildlife ecologists, federal agencies, state entities, and preservationists working together to examine a perceived problem,” explains Robel. “No matter what the outcome of the research effort, society will benefit from the scientific approach to the questions being addressed,” said Robel.

For more information on the NWCC or Wildlife Workgroup, please visit www.nationalwind.org. For additional information about the study, please contact the GS3C’s spokesperson: Dr. Robert J. Robel, Professor Emeritus, KSU, rjrobel@ksu.edu.

About RESOLVE, Inc.

Founded in 1977, RESOLVE, Inc. is a national leader and innovator in building consensus to address public policy disputes. Based in Washington DC, RESOLVE is a non-profit organization with particular expertise in handling cases involving complex scientific and technical information. RESOLVE staff manages the National Wind Coordinating Collaborative. For more information, visit www.resolve.org.