

Some Shutdowns for Altamont Wind Farm

Wind power operators at California's Altamont Pass will have to shut down 100 wind turbines, stop operating 5,300 other turbines during a two-month winter bird migration period, and change out the turbines over 13 years for newer, larger models, the Alameda County board of supervisors ruled last week.

Both environmentalists who have been pushing for major alterations of the Altamont wind farm and the wind industry were claiming victory. The greens, led by the Center for Biological Diversity, along with California Attorney General Bill Lockyer, had called for more stringent limits on operations at the site and a faster phase-in of new, bigger wind machines. Jeff Miller of the CBD, told the Tracy Press, It's a mixed bag. It's significantly better than what the country was set to approve a year-and-a-half ago.

The board will have a chance to take another look at the Altamont issue in September, giving the wind industry time to subject a California Energy Commission study that found significant bird mortality, particularly migrating raptors to full scientific scrutiny. Diane Fellman of FPL Energy told the local newspaper, We are encouraged that there will be a scientific review and the county is committed to balancing environmental measures with allowing the wind plants to operate.

The board's plan, hatched by Supervisor Scott Haggerty, will be expensive, estimated at \$540 million over the 13-year period. It will be expensive, Haggerty said, But it will result in a huge reduction in avian mortalities, make the industry more efficient, create more power and provide many jobs. [KM]