

Supervisors OK wind turbine for Bogle vineyards

By Anne Ternus-Bellamy

From page A1 | March 26, 2014 | [Leave Comment](#)

Yolo County supervisors on Tuesday unanimously approved a plan by Bogle Vineyards to erect a 398-foot wind turbine on property 4.5 miles southwest of the town of Clarksburg.

The turbine will generate 1.6 megawatts of electricity, to be used to offset the power demands and electricity costs of the Bogle wine production facility located there.

Wind turbines are not without their detractors — though they provide a source of clean energy, they also serve as a hazard to birds and bats. And among those urging county supervisors to not approve the Bogle wind turbine without further environmental review were representatives of the Sierra Club Yolano Group, Yolo Audubon Society and Tuleyome.

They were among the group of opponents who had appealed the Yolo County Planning Commission's decision to approve a use permit for the turbine late last year, bringing the matter before county supervisors on Tuesday.

Alan Pryor of the Sierra Club commended Bogle's efforts to reduce consumption and find alternative energy sources, but questioned county assessment methods that determined the likely impact on birds and bats would be biologically insignificant.

Indeed the primary complaint of opponents was the county's determination that an Environmental Impact Report was not required.

In assessing the possible impact of a wind turbine on birds and bats, the county's consulting biologist, Jim Estep, looked at data obtained from two other wind turbines nearby — the Cemex turbine near Cache Creek that was approved by county supervisors two years ago and the Superior Farms wind turbine located near Dixon.

Estep found the single wind turbines in both locations caused few bird and bat deaths: specifically, one bird and three bat deaths at the Cemex turbine and three bird and four bat deaths at the Superior Farms turbine, neither of which, Estep said, would be considered biologically significant.

"Most wind turbines are expected to be responsible for some (mortality)," Estep told supervisors. "But it remains a fairly rare event (and) there's only so much we can do."

In order to minimize the impact on birds and bats, Estep suggested mitigation measures which were accepted by Bogle. Those included surveying for, avoiding (and possibly relocating) potential burrowing owl sites; shutting down the turbine whenever the adjoining 115-acre parcel is being harvested or flood irrigated — both of which draw rodents to the surface and attract raptors; conducting three years of carcass monitoring around the turbine to determine the extent of avian mortality; and raising the minimum wind velocity required to turn the turbine blades between dusk and dawn when bats are most likely to be present.

But the mitigation measures did not appease opponents, including Pryor, who called them “so minuscule as to be almost comical were the potential outcome not so potentially tragic.”

Pryor and others argued that the bird population around the Bogle site is significantly larger than that near the Cemex and Dixon turbines so using mortality rates at those sites to predict mortality at the Bogle site was faulty.

Critics also took issue with Bogle focusing on wind power rather than solar power which they said would impact the environment less.

“At least two megawatts can be installed on existing buildings,” said turbine opponent Matthew Hunter, who added that Bogle’s only credible argument against using solar was cost.

But while Hunter said Bogle would not have to sacrifice farmland to install solar panels, Bogle representatives disagreed, telling supervisors that site lacks the rooftop and parking lot space needed to generate that much electricity through solar panels.

According to county staff, the proposed wind turbine and above-ground accessory equipment would be located on about 2,500 square feet (or 0.05 acres) of farmland. But a solar project producing one megawatt of electricity annually would take as much as five acres of farmland. A solar farm producing 1.6 megawatts annually — as the proposed single wind turbine would do — would require 7.5 to 8 acres of farmland, staff reported.

In urging supervisors to support the turbine, Warren Bogle noted “this would be the first large turbine to provide energy to a winery in California.”

“Throughout multiple generations, we’ve tried to do our part of the Clarksburg community,” Bogle said. “In no way did we want to do anything that we felt would harm the area. We did consider the impact on the environment.”

Echoing Bogle were a number of local farmers who urged supervisors to support the project.

They, in turn, were followed by opponents, including neighbors of the Bogle site who expressed concern over not just the threat to birds and bats, but also the noise the wind turbine would create.

But supervisors unanimously sided with Bogle, denying opponents' appeal of the use permit after a lengthy public hearing on Tuesday.

"I like the project and I'm going to vote for it," said Supervisor Jim Provenza of Davis. "We are dealing with competing environmental needs, but the need to address renewable energy is an overwhelming (one)."

Provenza added that he believed the mitigation provided met environmental review standards.

Supervisor Oscar Villegas of West Sacramento agreed, saying, "the mitigation plan and the options that have been presented make perfectly good sense ... the project makes sense. We've gotten sufficient levels of environmental review."

— Reach Anne Ternus-Bellamy at aternus@davisenterprise.net or 530-747-8051. Follow her on Twitter at @ATernusBellamy