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## Wind project mulled

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LONDONDERRY - A German firm - Volkswind - that specializes in the planning, developing, constructing and operating of wind farms has expressed an interest in possibly constructing wind turbines on Glebe Mountain.

According to Michael Easton, a project manager for Volkswind, he noticed the mountain as a potential site for wind energy when he was in Vermont skiing in December of 2009.

Though there may be interest in a project, Easton said Volkswind was in the preliminary stages of exploring the possibility.

"At this point we're trying to make a decision as to whether or not we want to pursue wind energy in Vermont," Easton said. "We'd be very interested in working with the Town of Londonderry and Windham to create a wind turbine project up there. [However,] we're not here to force a wind project upon anyone."

If they were to pursue a project, Easton said the company would be willing to work with the electric company to reduce the rates for residential customers.

Constructing wind turbines on top of the mountain has been opposed in the past. The efforts of groups such as The Friends of Glebe Mountain (FGM) - a group formed in 2005 to oppose a proposed industrial wind plant on Glebe Mountain, but that has been inactive until recently - and The Glebe Mountain Group were endorsed by Londonderry residents who voted against industrial wind on the site by a two to one margin on Feb. 24, 2006, according to The Friends of Glebe Mountain's Web site.

When Volkswind expressed interest in possibly constructing wind turbines on Glebe Mountain, The Friends of Glebe Mountain was formed again to resist the effort, according to the July 7 issue of Vermont Tiger - a non-partisan, non-profit advocacy and media enterprise that through a web site, print publications, symposiums and other events, promotes policies and political action aimed at sustained, environmentally-sound economic growth and prosperity in the Green Mountain State, according to the Web site.

Last week, Easton said he met with The Friends of Glebe Mountain in addition to some other groups.

"It's obvious in talking to them that they're committed to preserving Glebe Mountain and that's something that came across very clearly," he said. According to Hugh Kemper, a member of The Friends of Glebe Mountain, the organization is in the process of making contact with residents and property owners who are opposed to wind turbine projects on the mountain.

"We had over 1,800 signatures on the petition itself [in 2005,]" Kemper said. "[And] the early returns suggest that there will be as much opposition this time around as there was five years ago."

However, The Friends of Glebe Mountain are not the only voice of opposition to such a project.

"Right now I'm not in favor of putting them on Glebe Mountain," said Londonderry Select Board member Clyde Prouty. "I know the board feels the same way. The board definitely doesn't want it."

State representative for the Windham-Bennington-Windsor-1 District, Oliver Olsen, said if the project were to come to fruition it could have some adverse impacts on the area.

"I think there could be significant risk to the region from an environmental perspective," Olsen said. "Ecologically that's a very sensitive area. It's the site of a Class A stream and also provides critical wildlife habitat. The pristine beauty of that area is what makes the community such a desirable place to live and to visit and our local economy and local jobs are very dependent on travel tourism and real estate. So, in addition to the environmental concerns there are also significant risks to the local economy."

Olsen continued to say that an initiative had already begun to conserve the land and that it should be supported.

Sandy Wilbur, a member of The Glebe Mountain Group, was also opposed to the project.

"Our main concern is the preservation and conservation of this very important unfragmented, ecologically important area and we as a group are not the only ones," she said. "It's certainly been deemed very important from a wildlife perspective and many other perspectives."

Wilbur continued to say that the group was not opposed to wind power - or other forms of renewable energy such as solar, hydro, biomass, etc. - but said the group felt that wind projects should be appropriately placed.

According to Wilbur, Glebe Mountain was not only important bear and moose habitat land, but it was also part of the Connecticut Rivershed and the Green

Mountain designation. Furthermore, she said Cobb Brook - the Class A stream - was one of the few rivers in the state that was "classified as pristine from top to bottom."

In an e-mail, Easton said Volkswind decided to explore the possibility of building wind turbines on Glebe Mountain because, based on conversations that had occurred with residents of Londonderry, Windham and surrounding towns, it seemed as though wind power had become a lot more accepted than it had been just a few years ago.

Though there are voices of opposition to a project on Glebe Mountain, there are others who are not necessarily opposed to it.

"I think that wind turbines need to be put where there's wind, where the right ecological work has been done and where the communities want them," said Claire Trask, a candidate running for state representative for the Windham-Bennington-Windsor-1 District against Olsen.

In an open letter to the editor printed in The Journal last week Trask stated that she did not believe she would ever see wind turbines on Glebe Mountain. She continued to say that if the five towns in the Windham-Bennington-Windsor-1 District - which include Londonderry, Jamaica, Winhall, Weston and Stratton - wanted wind turbines on the mountain she would not stand in the way, but that she would not initiate the process either.

For more information about Volkswind, visit the Web site at [www.volkswind.us](http://www.volkswind.us). For more information about The Friends of Glebe Mountain or The Glebe Mountain Group, visit their Web sites at [www.friendsofglebemountain.org](http://www.friendsofglebemountain.org) and [www.glebemountaingroup.org](http://www.glebemountaingroup.org), respectively.