

Ohio Wind Power FAQ

Who oversees wind power development in the state of Ohio?

The Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) regulates major utilities facilities and economically significant wind farms (greater than 5 megawatts). The Board reviews each application for a Certification of Compatibility and Public Need by gathering information from stakeholders and conducting an independent review before making its decision on the application.

What is the status of wind power development in Ohio?

Since 2008, wind power developers in the state have actively moved several wind farm projects forward. Two projects are operational, the Blue Creek Wind Farm (Van Wert and Paulding counties) and the Timber Road project (Paulding County). The two projects consist of 207 total turbines, with a combined generating capacity of 403 megawatts of electricity. Construction commenced on the Northwest Ohio Wind Farm (Paulding County) in December 2013.

Additionally, several projects have received certification from the OPSB and are awaiting construction. These projects include Buckeye I & II Wind (Champaign County), Hog Creek and Hardin Wind (Hardin County), Black Fork Wind Farm (Crawford and Richland counties), the Scioto Ridge Wind Farm (Hardin and Logan counties), and the Greenwich Windpark (Huron County). The LEEDCo Icebreaker Project (Lake Erie) is in the midst of the siting process and the Seneca Wind Farm (Seneca County) is pre-application.

What are the setback requirements for siting wind turbines in Ohio?

Ohio law establishes a minimum setback distance for wind turbines. For wind farm applications submitted to the OPSB on or after September 15, 2014, turbines must be located at least 1,125 feet from the tip of the turbine blade at ninety degrees to the nearest adjacent property line, unless the applicant obtains the appropriate waivers.

How does the OPSB address health and safety concerns such as ice throw, blade shear, and noise?

The Ohio Administrative Code (OAC 4906-17-08) requires that applicants evaluate and describe the potential impact from ice throw at the nearest property boundary to each turbine, including plans to minimize potential impacts if warranted. This evaluation must also be completed for blade shear.

Additionally, applicants seeking to develop wind farms are required to give careful consideration in evaluating and describing the operational noise levels expected at adjacent residences. Ohio law does not set a maximum noise standard or a set decibel allowance for wind turbine operations. Therefore, the OPSB reviews each applicant's noise assessment on an individual basis and may propose avoidance or mitigation measures as necessary.

How does the OPSB address shadow flicker?

Shadow flicker from wind turbines can occur when moving turbine blades pass in front of the sun, thereby creating alternating changes in light intensity or shadows. Shadow flicker primarily occurs at sunrise and sunset when the sun is low on the horizon and a turbine is facing a receptor. Ohio law does not provide standards for frequencies or duration of or exposure to shadow flicker. The OPSB reviews the applicant's forecasts of shadow flicker and may mandate mitigation to limit the amount of time per year that it may affect a residence.

Does the OPSB consider the effects on aviation by a wind farm development?

The Applicant is required to coordinate with the Federal Aviation Administration and the Ohio Department of Transportation's Aviation Division to determine if their proposal would have an effect on navigable air space, and, if applicable, develop appropriate mitigation measures. This is also reviewed by the OPSB staff in their investigation.

What happens when the turbines are decommissioned?

Commercial scale wind turbines typically have a life expectancy of 20-25 years. Ohio Administrative Code (OAC 4906-17) state that applicants must describe a plan for decommissioning each proposed wind facility and address the issue of financial arrangements designed to assure the funding necessary to disassemble the facility. Often, when a certificate is given to a project, it is under a condition that the site must be restored to the same topography that existed prior to construction upon decommissioning.

How does the board address the issue of roads and bridges within a wind farm development project?

Transporting commercial wind turbines often presents a logistical concern for the applicant and community because of the intensive use of local roadways. The OPSB requires developers to evaluate and describe the anticipated impact to roads and bridges associated with construction vehicles and equipment delivery. Often, the applicant enters a 'road use agreement' with local officials, requiring pre-construction upgrades, post-construction repairs, and financial assurance to return all roads to pre-construction condition or better.

Where can I find more information?

Information about the Ohio Power Siting Board, its process, and standards may be found at www.opsb.ohio.gov.

