

Apex Clean Energy submitted an application to the Botetourt County Board of Supervisors for a Special Exception Permit to construct an industrial wind plant under the name Rocky Forge Wind Farm, on North Mountain, located in Botetourt County and adjacent to the Rockbridge County line. The project includes the installation of 25, 550-foot turbines that will be brightly lit and will be visible throughout the Shenandoah Valley. Road construction and turbine placement will require blasting and grading the steep slopes of North Mountain. I am in possession of a January 21, 2016 letter to the Botetourt County Board of Supervisors in which Molly Joseph Ward, the Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources, wrote "in support of Apex Clean Energy's application for permit and a special exception permit for Rocky Forge wind farm." The Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the special exception permit on January 26, 2016.

Apex Clean Energy has made significant campaign contributions to Virginia governor Terry McAuliffe. In fact, Apex's CEO Sandy Reisky, whose full name is Stanislav Reisky de Dubnic, donated \$25,000 to McAuliffe between 2012 and 2015. In return, Governor McAuliffe appointed Reisky to the newly-created Virginia Energy Council in 2014. The Virginia Energy Council drafted the Virginia Energy Plan, which went before the General Assembly in October of 2014.

Ms. Ward is both a member of the Virginia Energy Council and the Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources. According to the state website, the Secretary of Natural Resources is charged with upholding Article XI of the Virginia Constitution, which states that "the Commonwealth's policy [is] to protect its atmosphere, lands, and waters from pollution, impairment, or destruction, for the benefit, enjoyment, and general welfare of the people of the Commonwealth."

I find it to be at odds with this constitutional policy that Ms. Ward wrote a letter to the Botetourt County Board of Supervisors in support of the Rocky Forge project even before Apex submitted its application for permit by rule to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. She wrote in support of the project in the absence of data regarding the project's environmental and natural resource impacts, which is information that is required for the permit by rule application. It seems imprudent, and indeed dismissive of her constitutional duty to protect the Commonwealth's natural resources, for Ms. Ward to endorse the Rocky Forge wind project to Botetourt County officials in the absence of this data.

This project, like all industrial wind farms, will have significant impacts on wildlife, water quality and the quality of life of tax-paying citizens of Virginia. After reviewing the available wind data, it does not appear that there is sufficient wind to justify these impacts. My question is this: how will Apex's application receive a fair and impartial review by Virginia Department of Environmental Quality staff given that Ms. Ward, their boss, has already voiced her approval in writing? It appears that cronyism is alive and well in the Old Dominion!

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