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# County of Rockbridge

Office of the County Administrator

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Lexington, Virginia 24450

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County Administrator

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May 31, 2016

Rocky Forge Wind, LLC  
c/o Apex Clean Energy, Inc./ Charlie Johnson  
310 4th St. NE, Suite 200  
Charlottesville, VA 22902

## Re: Rocky Forge Wind Energy Project

Dear Mr. Johnson,

I am writing on behalf of the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors to express concerns about the Rocky Forge Wind Energy project. Please accept and include these comments as part of the official record during the current, DEQ mandated public comment period which closes on June 6, 2016.

As you know, Rockbridge County did not receive detailed information regarding the proposed project until January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Subsequently, we requested and received a presentation from Apex on January 25<sup>th</sup>. Prior to that time, all public notices were geared toward populations in Botetourt County, where all public meetings have been held, despite the fact that the project essentially sits on the County line. In the succeeding months, Rockbridge County residents and others have submitted compelling arguments which include either new information or information which is counter to that originally presented by Apex concerning the proposed project. Key concerns are listed below:

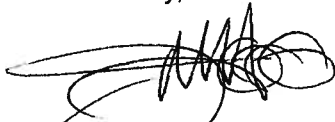
- 1) Human health - Residents in the potential area of impact have produced compelling arguments and research which brings into question the methodology Apex employed to develop the projected sound model. Further, Apex fails to recognize and/or acknowledge existing, valid research and subsequent findings which provide strong indication that sound generated by wind turbines has significant and detrimental impacts to human health.
- 2) Wildlife concerns – Negative impacts to avian life, particularly the Golden Eagle, have not been adequately studied. Similarly, the project is centered in a critical wildlife corridor, connecting the Alleghany and Blue Ridge mountain chains.
- 3) Electrical power generation – Central to the Apex argument for emplacement of a wind energy facility on North Mountain is the prediction of the overall energy generation potential. We feel that the public has not been presented with a realistic portrayal of the actual power output which could be expected from placement of the towers in this location. In that Apex has been unwilling to share the raw data upon which it has based its predictions, Rockbridge County residents and others have researched readily available wind energy data, which show the wind energy potential for the Rocky Forge project to be much lower (approximately half) than that which has been presented by Apex.
- 4) Impact to aquifers and water availability/quality – Rockbridge residents have brought forth concern regarding the potential impact to aquifers, including nearby Moore's Creek. It is our understanding that significant blasting would be required to install the massive foundations necessary to support each of the 25 towers, risking interruption and/or contamination of critical aquifers and possible damage to the century-old Moore's Creek dam.

- 5) Economic impact – There is no question that Rockbridge County will be adversely impacted by the Rocky Forge project and we challenge Apex to prove otherwise. Studies provided to us show that properties near existing wind energy emplacements have reduced value. This impacts both property owners and the County at large, via reduced tax revenue. Further, the tourism industry is one of Rockbridge County’s leading economic generators, and is anchored by our scenic beauty. With illuminated structures reaching up to 550 feet on the horizon, the Rocky Forge project poses a serious threat to our ability maintain a base of visitors drawn here with the expectation of unspoiled vistas. Finally, Botetourt County stands to receive an estimated \$750,000 - \$1,250,000 annual tax benefit to offset its losses in other areas. Rockbridge County will receive nothing.

On a final note, though we support alternative energy, we respectfully request that the backers of a project of this magnitude, with the potential to alter the landscape so profoundly, first provide irrefutable evidence to show that the energy generated is worth the significant human, environmental, and economic tradeoffs required.

Should you have questions regarding our request, please feel free to contact me at (540) 463-1460.

Sincerely,



John M. Higgins  
Chairman, Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors – Buffalo District Supervisor

Cc: The Honorable David Hinty – Vice Chairman, Natural Bridge District Supervisor  
The Honorable Albert “Buster” - Lewis - Walkers Creek District Supervisor  
The Honorable Ronnie Campbell - South River District Supervisor  
The Honorable Russell Ford- Kerrs Creek District Supervisor  
The Honorable Creigh Deeds – Virginia Senate, 25<sup>th</sup> District  
The Honorable Ben Cline – Virginia House of Representatives, 24<sup>th</sup> District  
Spencer Suter – Rockbridge County Administrator  
Mary “Beth” Major – Virginia Department of Environmental Quality