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Wind and solar projects in Mass. continue to push the envelope

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As wind turbines continue to multiply on the landscape, the Mass. Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is about to convene a Wind and Noise Technical Advisory Group (WNTAG) to address local community issues regarding wind turbine noise and regulatory policy. WNTAG is DEP's response to the comments it received following the issuance of the Wind Turbine Health Impact Study in 2012, likely coupled with complaints from residents in Falmouth, Kingston, and other communities. The goal of WNTAG will be to advise DEP on technical, regulatory, and policy matters, while encouraging wind power development. DEP already has noise regulations in place, but a determination will have to be made as to whether the existing limit of 10 db(A), is sufficient to address the unique characteristics of wind turbine sounds. WNTAG will also be asked to consider possible pre-construction permitting for wind turbines, which may include modeling requirements. WNTAG is due to initially convene this month to begin to address these issues.

Meanwhile solar panels continue to be developed and installed in commercial and municipal settings. The town of Scituate added a solar array to its existing wind power, collectively providing 100% of the power for its municipal functions. The city of Boston established its Renew Boston Solarize Program, in which it is seeking proposals from installers of small-scale solar photovoltaic systems.

And a word about the future of Brownfields funding in Mass. At this writing, the governor has signed a five-year extension to continue the Brownfields Tax Credit. Unfortunately, additional funding to recapitalize the Brownfields Redevelopment Fund was not included in the Legislature's FY 2014 budget. However, it may appear in a supplemental budget package at some time during the year. Stay tuned.

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