

Saddleback Ridge Wind, LLC // natural Resource Protection Act (NRPA) and Site
Location of Development Act applications

Additional Documents from DEP Licensing Record

- Visual Quality and Scenic Character Report (Michael Lawrence Assoc. –
December 2010)

Saddleback Ridge Wind Project
Carthage, Maine
Generating Facility-Visual Quality and Scenic Character Report
December, 2010

Prepared for

Friends of Maine's Mountains
284 Maine Street, Suite 200
Wilton, Maine 04294

Prepared by

Michael Lawrence Assoc.
Landscape Architects & Site Planning Consultants
8 Linden Lane
Essex Junction, Vermont 05452

Friends of Maine's Mountains requested that I review the application prepared by Patriot Renewables for the Proposed Saddleback Wind Project located in Carthage, Maine and to offer comments on its visual impact on residents in the surrounding area. I have prepared a number of visual analysis reports and am familiar with the work involved. I believe there are good sites for wind energy projects, but on certain other sites scenic resources may suffer unreasonable impacts.

I reviewed the Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Terrence J. DeWan Associates, Inc., landscape architects, then visited the area around the project site on November 18 & 19, 2010 recording my observations with photographs.

While I believe the DeWan report to be accurate, my field observations in the area of the proposed wind turbines lead me to believe that the report lacks a proper emphasis on Lake Webb's close relationship and ultimate value in the broad landscape and more specifically as it is intimately co-joined with Mount Blue State Park.

The following information presents some of my photographs and thoughts to supplement and in some cases to rebut the DeWan report. I use the same the numbering format and titling as the Dewan Report.

1.1 Overview

“Within an eight-mile radius the Project would be visible from several scenic resources of state or national significance as defined by LD 2283 An Act to Implement Recommendations of the Governor’s Task Force on Wind Power Development (Maine Wind Power Law).

There are three additional areas that need to be included in this list. They are;

Webb Beach on Lake Webb in Mount Blue State Park in Weld.



Saddleback Mountain and South Saddleback Ridge from Mount Blue State Park Beach

The DeWan report includes a photograph taken from the beach at Mount Blue State Park (Appendix A – Study Area Photographs – Photograph P-2). The photo illustrates a group of trees hiding the Saddleback Mountain Project site. This is accurate at this location towards the south end of the beach. However, as viewers move along the beach to the north, Saddleback Mountain and the ridge where the windtowers are proposed come into complete view at a distance of approximately 6 miles. This area of the beach is adjacent to the Mount Blue State Park campground.

Webb Lake in Weld.

Saddleback Mtn. & South Saddleback Ridge from Webb Lake Offshore - Mount Blue State Park

Webb Lake is a state significant resource because it is essentially part of Mount Blue State Park. It has direct contact with the park along almost a mile of beach and provides a host of water based recreation activities advertised and promoted through the park. Park facilities on land and in Webb Lake support water recreation activities. Those facilities include; shower and changing area, roped-off swimming area, navigational markers, boats for rent, boat launch ramp and boat trailer parking area. These park investments encourage, support and enhance the public's experience in and on the water. Mount Blue State Park collects special fees for boat rentals and use of the boat launch. For many people, water based activities associated with Webb Lake represent the essence of the Mount Blue State Park experience. Webb Lake lies between 4 and 8.5 miles from the location of the proposed towers.

The proposed windtower project site located on the south ridge of Saddleback Mountain is in full view from almost everywhere on Webb Lake.

Center Hill Overlook in Mount Blue State Park in Weld

Photos P-7, P-8 & P-9 in Appendix A of the DeWan Report as well as Photo Simulation 2 in Appendix B appear to have been taken at the Center Hill Picnic Area (el. 1166 ft.)



The Center Hill Overlook (el.1658 ft.) is located approximately one mile east and 500 ft. higher than the Center Hill Picnic Area. Users access this wilderness lookout from a gated parking area served with modest toilet facility, ascend a 2/10 mile long trail constructed of gravel and timber steps to a rock-ledge lookout. From here hikers enjoy a breathtaking south-southwest mountain ridge vista that includes Saddleback Mountain. The distance from here to the closest proposed windtower is 7.3 miles and 8.5 to the furthest.

1.2 Conclusion –

The Saddleback Ridge Wind Project will have a visual impact on three areas that were not considered in the DeWan Report; Webb beach in Mount Blue State Park, large areas of Webb Lake utilized as an essential part of the Mount Blue State Park experience and the Center Hill Overlook area.

While I agree with the DeWan report that topography and roadside vegetation block the majority of views of the proposed project, I would add that this fact makes open areas and places where there are views including Webb Beach, Lake Webb and the Center Hill Overlook especially important.

The zone of Webb Beach where the towers will be visible is adjacent to Mount Blue State Park's campground and a popular place to enjoy lake and mountain vistas. The proposed 12 tower project will be in complete view from this area. For many people, the Mount Blue State Park experience includes activities on Webb Lake. Although the proposed windtower project will not be visible within much of the park, they will be highly visible on the lake and will therefore have an impact on visitors who are expecting to enjoy Mount Blue State Park. Therefore the towers need to undergo a visual assessment from the Webb Lake perspective. The Center Hill Overlook area (el. 1658 ft.), provides a way for visitors with young children or limited hiking ability to access a commanding lake/mountain vista. The vista has direct views of the wind turbine site and will also impact Mount Blue State Park visitors.

In reviewing the context, significance, existing public use, viewer expectations, project impact, and potential affect on public use of Webb Beach, Webb Lake and the Center Hill Overlook area, I determined that the Project will have an unreasonable adverse impact on the scenic values and the existing uses of Mount Blue State Park's Webb Beach and Webb Lake, state significant resources and a moderate adverse impact on the scenic values and existing uses of Mount Blue State Park's Center Hill Overlook, a state significant resource.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

Michael Lawrence Associates (MLA) of Essex Junction, Vermont prepared this visual assessment of the Saddleback Ridge Wind Project in Carthage, Maine. MLA worked closely with Green Mountain Geographics Ltd. (GMG) GIS development and visualization services, Essex Junction, Vermont using Google Earth Pro and Arc GIS to develop computer mapping to help understand the physical characteristics of the landscape and areas impacted by the project. MLA visited and photographed the site to review and record existing conditions, developed photosimulations to illustrate changes to existing views and reviewed visual impacts as outlined in the Maine Wind Power Law.

2.2 Field Investigations

MLA collected field data during site visits on November 18 & 19, 2010. Photos represent both broad landscape qualities in the area as well as detail in order to understand regional character. Photos

collected from websites that represent a range of public and private interests and from Mount Blue State Park personnel have been utilized as well.

All MLA photographs were taken with an Olympus E-500 digital camera recording at a 3264x2448 pixel resolution. Most were taken with a lens setting comparable with a 50mm film camera lens. All the photos used in the photosimulations were taken with a lens setting equivalent to a 50mm film camera lens. Photo locations were recorded on a USGS map of the area.

2.3 Photosimulations and Viewshed Mapping

Photosimulations were prepared to illustrate the anticipated changes to views from the state significant resources of Webb Beach in Mount Blue State Park, Webb Lake and the Center Hill Overlook in Mount Blue State Park.

Photosimulations were prepared by MLA with assistance from GMG. GMG first developed a 3D terrain depiction and a 3D graphic model of the GE turbine. The terrain was created from the 20 foot contour GIS layer downloaded from the Maine GIS web site. The contour layer was converted to a raster dataset using ArcGIS software and displayed in 3D using the ArcScene viewing environment. The GE turbines were modeled in SketchUp Pro using the dimensions provided in the filed impact report. Turbine locations (X&Y) were built into a GIS point layer using coordinates (UTM Zone 19 in meters) identified in the Noise section of the report. Once the point layer had been created, it was associated with the terrain for 3D display and symbolized with the turbine model. Using ArcScene as the display environment, computer screen captures were made from 3 key vantage points on and around Webb Lake. These images provided the ridge profile depiction to then correctly superimpose a turbine model into the actual photograph taken on site. This last step used Photoshop to merge the properly scaled turbines into the camera image.

The turbines were also modeled into the Google Earth environment to compare the terrain profile with the GIS presentation. The Google Earth presentation also provided an interactive viewing perspective, allowing assessment from different locations.

Two photo simulations are presented for each view modeled with the towers in a dark tone. This is to account for the range of lighting and sky conditions that may emphasize visibility. Further sets might be useful to account for other sky conditions.

The photosimulations in the report are printed at 13.75" wide and should be viewed at a distance of 20.36" to attain an image size comparable to the photographed object.

Note that while photographs capture visual images, they only approximate what the naked eye can see. Through stereoscopic view, we see in depth while a film image is flat. Additionally our eyes can see both dark and bright parts of a scene with clarity, where a camera will either underexpose (render too dark) or overexpose (render too light) an image with both shadow and bright background. This is because film or the digital plate is uniformly sensitive to light whereas the retina is not. Therefore when viewing

photosimulations it is important to keep in mind that people will see the towers more clearly in reality. My experience viewing windtowers confirms this information.

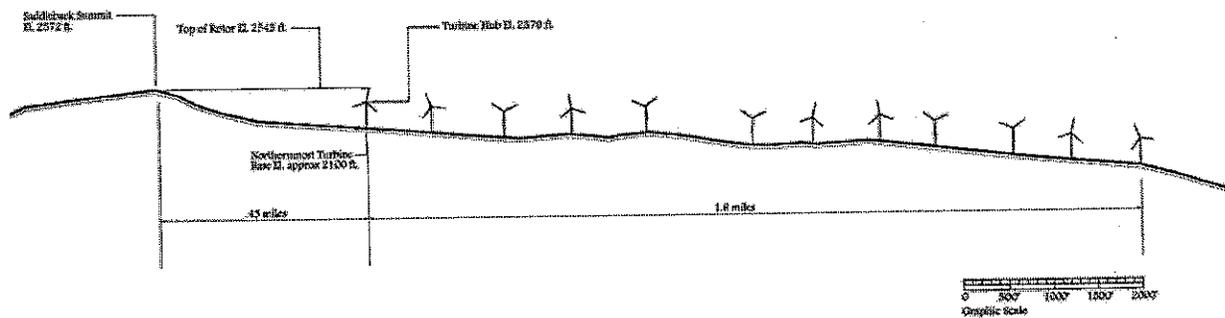
5.0 Regulatory Requirements

MLA considered the Maine Wind Power Law criteria for visual assessment outlined in the DeWan report including:

- A. The significance of the potentially affected scenic resource of state or national significance;
- B. The existing character of the surrounding area;
- C. The expectation of the typical viewer;
- D. The project purpose and context of the proposed activity;
- E. The extent, nature and duration of potentially affected public uses of the scenic resource of state or national significance and the potential effect of the generating facilities' presence on the public's continued use and enjoyment of the scenic resource of state or national significance and
- F. The scope and scale of the potential effect of views of the generating facilities on the scenic resource of state or national significance, including but not limited to issues related to the number and extent of turbines visible from the scenic resource of state or national significance, the distance from the scenic resource of state or national significance and the effect of prominent features of the development on the landscape. A finding by Maine DEP that the development's generating facilities are a highly visible feature in the landscape is not a solely sufficient basis for determination that an expedited wind energy project has an unreasonable adverse effect on the scenic values and existing uses related to scenic character of a scenic resource of state or national significance. In making its determination, Maine DEP shall consider insignificant the effects of portions of the development's generating facilities located more than 8 miles, measured horizontally, from a scenic resource of state or national significance.

4.0 Project Description

4.1 Wind Turbines



Schematic Northwest Elevation Illustrating Scale of Proposed Windtowers on Saddleback Mountain South Ridge

Elevation Showing Project Scale

The elevation illustrates that the towers are spread out along the ridgeline for a distance of 1.6 miles. The location of the nearest tower to the summit of Saddleback Mountain is a little over 0.4 of a mile. The base of that tower is about 470 ft. below the summit with the top of its rotor is approximately 30 feet in elevation below the summit. So, looking at the Saddleback Mountain, the overall height of the closest tower is very close to the summit. The steep slope immediately south of the summit is a recognizable landform. To help understand the scale of this project one must visualize one of the towers fitting within the height of this slope.

These height and distance measurements indicate a project of enormous scale with high visibility from anywhere in the surroundings that currently is able to view Saddleback Mountain and the South Ridge.

Depending on lighting and atmospheric conditions, tower visibility can range from imperceptible to highly observable. The towers can appear anywhere between stark dark silhouettes to luminous bright objects, dark when seen in shadow with the background sky lit up, brightly shining when bathed in sunbeams coming from a low angle and seen against a dark sky.

The turbine's overall height (higher than a 40 story building), unnatural form and rotor rotation all contrast with the natural environment and attract viewers' attention.

4.2 Project Lighting

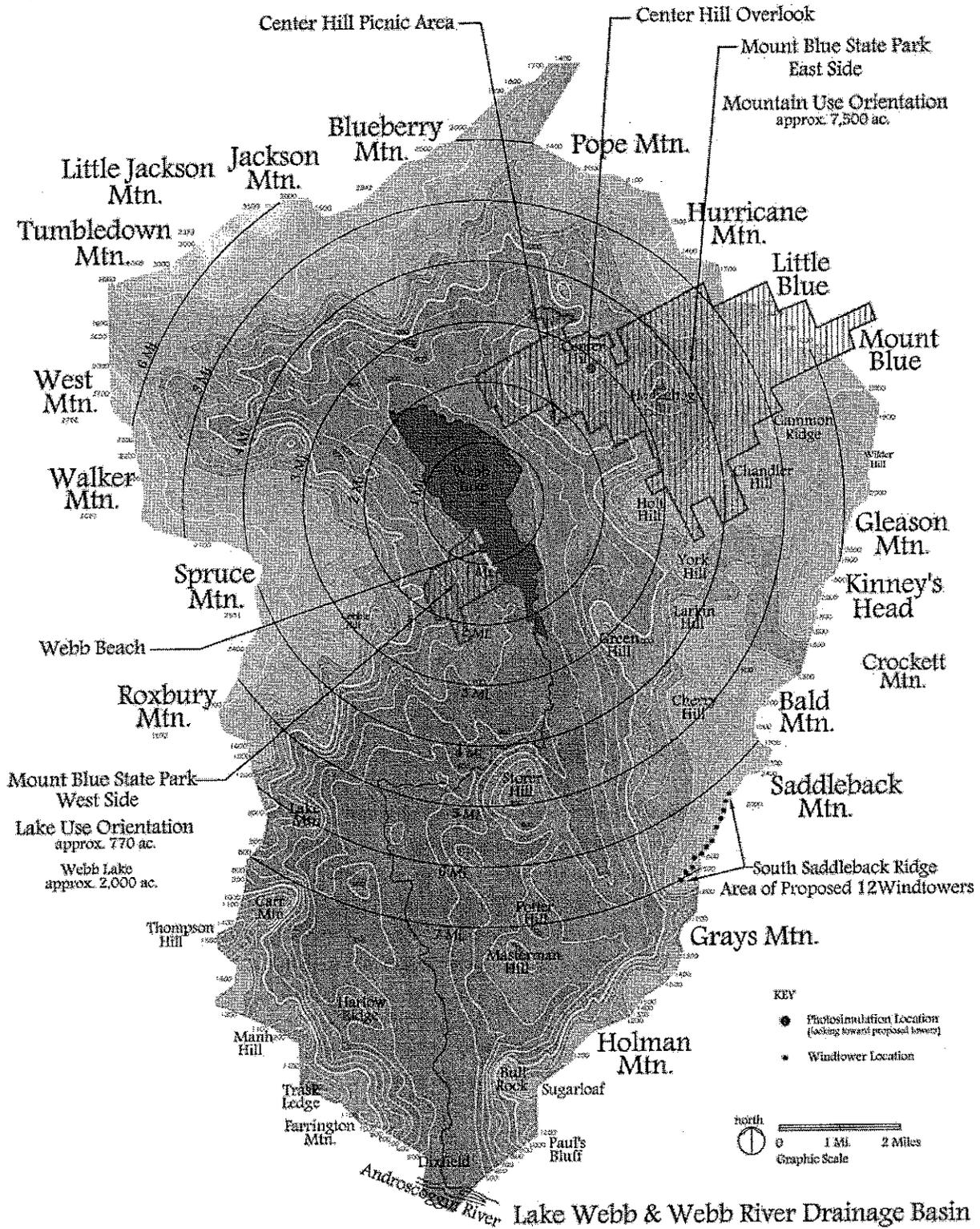
Lighting will affect nighttime views from the northern part of Webb Beach at Mount Blue State Park and from almost everywhere on Webb Lake.

The area of Webb Beach affected by night lighting is adjacent to the Mount Blue State Park campground and used for nighttime activities including enjoying the stars and dark sky. Flashing lights will be detrimental to this type of peaceful activity.

Tower lighting will be apparent over almost the entire area of Webb Lake disturbing the tranquility and magical quality of the night atmosphere for anyone on the water, especially during times when the lake is calm.

While tower lighting will be visible from the Center Hill Overlook in Mount Blue State Park, the area is utilized primarily during the day, so the impact will be minimal. However there are lean-to shelters on the east side of Center Hill that accommodate overnight campers. Visible blinking lights would discourage the construction of any night-time camping facilities on the south side of Center Hill in the vicinity of the overlook.

5.0 PROJECT STUDY AREA

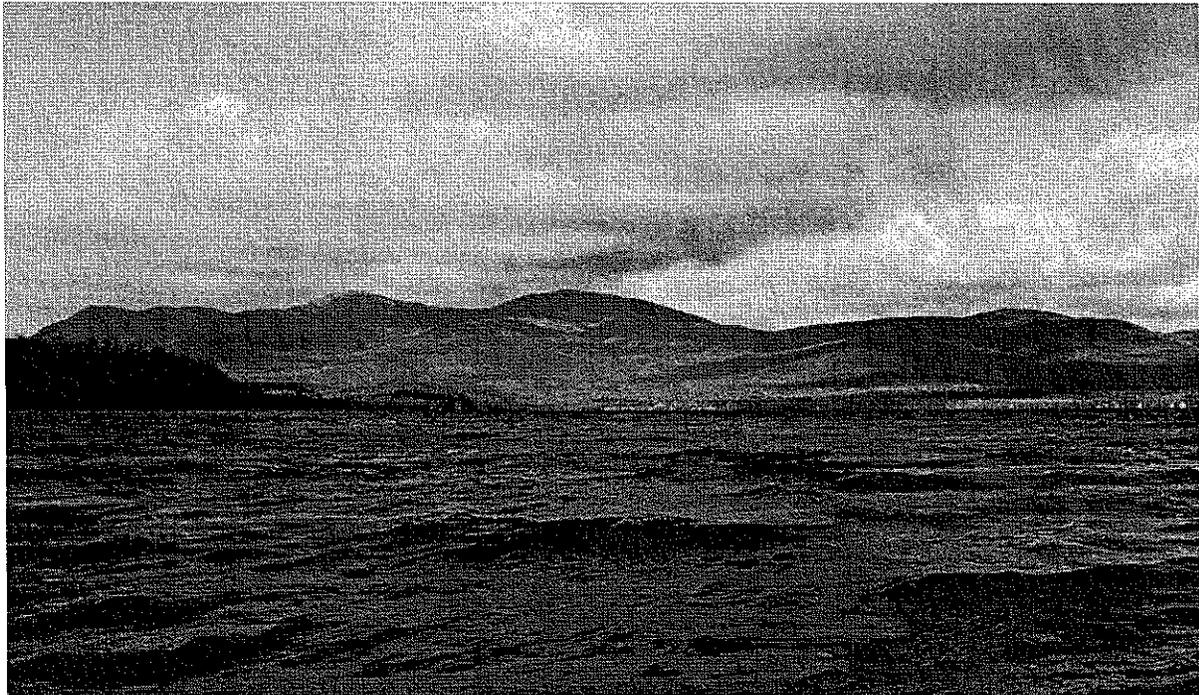


5.1 Existing Character of the Surrounding Area

5.1.1- 5.1.4 Landforms, Water Resources, Vegetative Patterns & Cultural Character

The site for the proposed project is part of a 41 mile long series of hills and mountains that enclose the Webb Lake and Webb River drainage basin on three sides. The arc of high terrain forms a valley 14 miles long running north to south and 8 miles at its widest point east to west.

In general the mountains that ring the valley descend gradually from north to south.



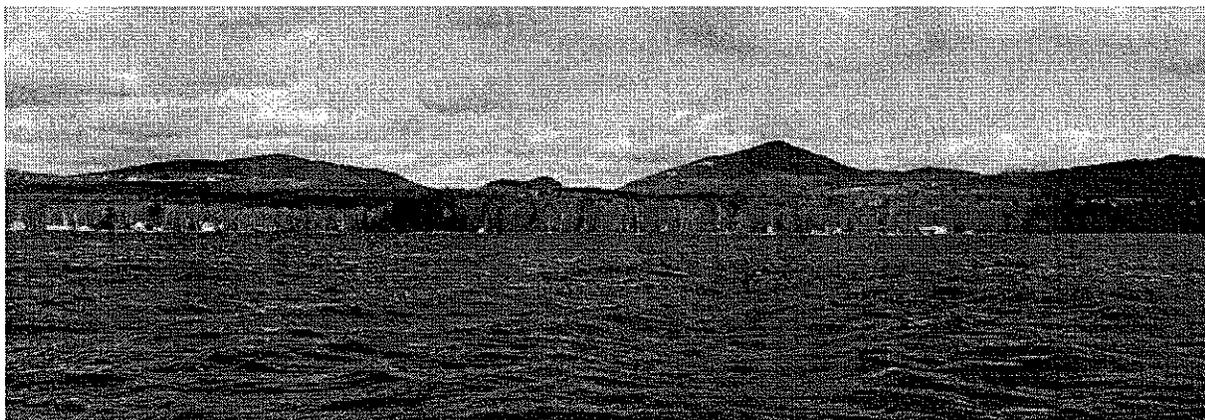
North Valley Mountains from Webb Lake just offshore from Mount Blue State Park Beach

Tumbledown, Jackson, Little Jackson, Blueberry, Pope and Hurricane Mountains with elevations ranging from 2100 to 3500 ft. form an arc 6 miles long that closes the valley to the north. The area is a popular destination for hiking and mountain climbing. The Tumbledown Conservation Alliance continues to create conservation easements, public reserved lands and trailheads here and to date has preserved over 19,000 acres.



Mountains West of Webb Lake from Center Hill Overlook on the East Side Mount Blue State Park

West, Walker, Spruce and Roxbury Mountains as well as a series of high hills further south with elevations ranging from 1200 to 2700 ft. form a wall running for almost fourteen miles to the west.



East Mountains from Webb Lake just Offshore from Mount Blue State Park Beach



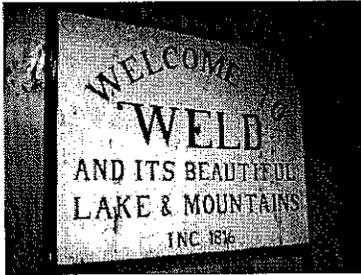
Southeast Mountains from Webb Lake just Offshore from Mount Blue State Park Beach



4 Mile Long Webb Lake looking South with Bald & Saddleback Mountains Beyond

Little Blue, Mount Blue, Gleason, Kinney's Head, Bald, Saddleback, Grays and Holman Mountains with elevations between 1300 and 3100 ft. provide valley closure to the east and southeast. 4 mile long Webb Lake (el. 678) running in a north/south direction and one across, east to west, is roughly centered in the upper half of the valley adjacent to the highest mountains. The Webb River flows out of the south end of the lake and joins the Androscoggin River about 10 miles to the south.

The valley has a strong sense of place due to outstanding contrast exhibited in three major natural features; the high nearly continuous ridgeline perimeter encircling three sides of the valley juxtaposed against the sky, the heavily vegetated undulating hills set against the mountainous backdrop and the huge central open space created by Webb Lake set against the forested upsloping backdrop.



Webb Lake, Weld, Maine, Looking South to Bald & Saddleback Mountains

The qualities of Webb Lake including its size, shape, proportions, its surface texture and ability to reflect sunshine, moonlight and various sky hues and passing clouds present an ever changing and often dramatic contrast to the surrounding tree covered hills and mountains. The contrast of lake, mountains and sky create a magnificent environment. The scale of the landscape is grand because Webb Lake creates endless opportunities for distant views in every direction. The place is big enough to see weather rolling in and big enough for observers to read the mood in the atmosphere, all qualities that help define a place possessing great scenic beauty.

5.1.4 Cultural Character

Summer Camps – Mountainside

Blueberry Mountain Bible Camp and Retreat Center



View of Webb Lake Valley looking South from Blueberry Mountain Bible Camp & Retreat

Quotation from Blueberry Mountain Bible Camp website;

“Blueberry Mountain Bible Camp & Retreat Center is located in Township 6 North of Weld, on 300 acres of pristine wilderness, almost 2 miles from the main road. Our lodge includes the following all under one roof: dormitory space for 52 people, chapel w/fireplace, lounge w/fireplace, living quarters for the permanent staff. Mt. Blue State Park on Webb Lake is a 20 minute drive from camp. They have a beach, nature Center and many trails to hike. We use their beach for swimming. For hiking, there are 4 local mountain trails including Tumbledown, Little Jackson and Mt. Blue. The trail for Blueberry Mtn. starts here on camp property.”

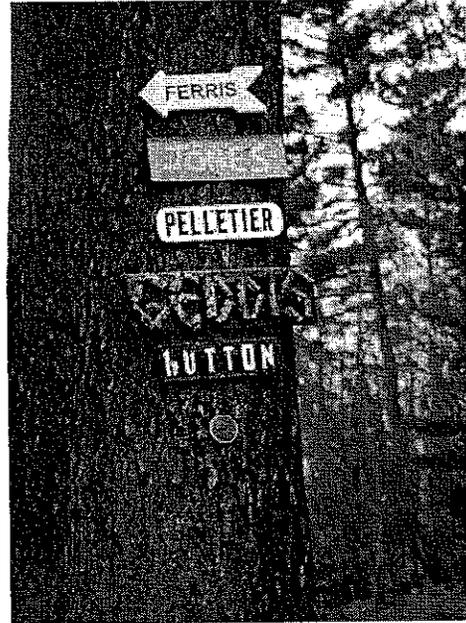
The comment, “pristine wilderness”, describes why this place is so attractive. The description of Mount Blue State Park including Webb Lake and the Tumbledown-Little Jackson-Mt. Blue hiking indicate that the entire valley is perceived as a single area providing many opportunities for recreation.

Hiking report Blueberry Mountain Bible Camper from amateur-hikers.com website;

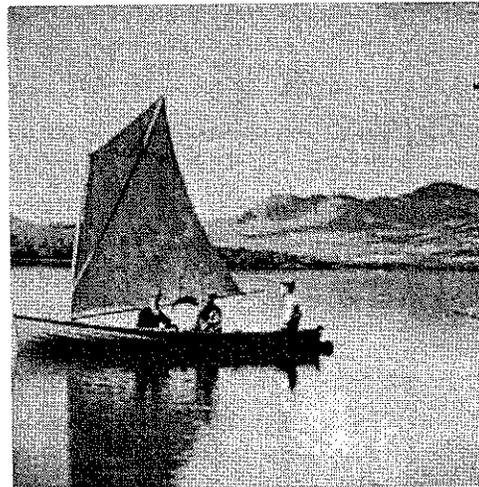
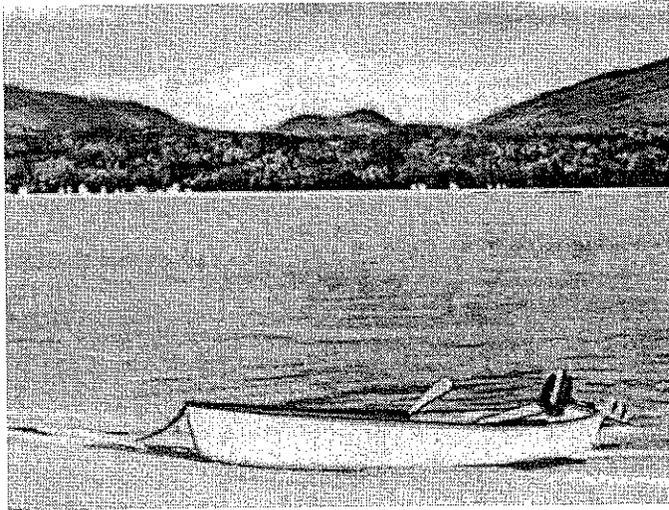
“As part of the camp activities, we had one morning that we hiked Blueberry Mountain. Most of the way up the mountain you are in the woods, and can't see any nice views, but when you get to the top, you can see 360 degree vistas, including most of the Weld area mountains, plus (in the distance) Sugarloaf, and - on a clear day - Mount Washington.. And, best of all, you can see a beautiful view of Webb Lake (part of the Mount Blue State Park).”

This statement indicates the vital importance of Webb Lake in the mountain setting.

Waterfront cottages –Webb Lakeshore



Camp WaitAMinit and Warmly Personal Signage along Webb Lake



Recreation & Enjoyment on Webb Lake Ove the Years

Summer cottages or camps dot the periphery of Webb Lake. Many appear to be at least 30-70 years old indicating a population of summer residents that enjoys and cherishes this natural environment, returning year after year. The presence of the camps in close proximity to the shoreline also demonstrates the residents' desire for direct access into and onto the lake. While summer camps along the shoreline are in view, they appear nestled comfortably into the thick shoreline vegetation and appear dwarfed by the grandly scaled mountain landscape.

Summer Camps – Webb Lakeshore - Camp Kawanhee

Photo and Quotation from the Camp Kawanhee website;



Camp Kawanhee Newsletter Photo

“Begun in 1921. Operated by the (non-profit) George and Raymond Frank Foundation. - Mission statement ; ‘The Frank Foundation’s mission is to provide boys and young men with experiential educational opportunities designed to encourage self-sufficiency and teamwork and an appreciation of the natural world. Our program consists of a summer session of seven weeks that promotes cooperative living in a safe and nurturing environment. We offer a rustic camp setting on the shores of a pristine lake surrounded by mountains, together with a staff sensitive to the needs of boys and a liberal arts philosophy that has stood the test of time, and yet continues to evolve. It is our hope that members of the Kawanhee community will return to their everyday lives as better, more productive citizens of the world.’ Core Values; ‘Environmental Consciousness: Our programs reflect our belief that to appreciate the natural world one must experience it, directly, personally and authentically. We are committed to fostering a sense of personal responsibility toward the natural world and, when appropriate, to taking a hand in preserving what we can.’”

The photo shows a special environment with the potential to make possible unique experiences that foster joy, health, learning and wholeness. Wording in the Camp’s mission statement, “a rustic camp setting on a pristine lake surrounded by mountains” and core value statement, “to appreciate the natural world, one must experience it, directly, personally and authentically.” and 90 year tradition indicate an environment held in extremely high esteem.

Summer Camps – Webb Lakeshore - Camp Lawroweld



The Lodge at Camp Lawroweld

From Camp Lawroweld website;

“A youth camp for the Seventh Day Advent Church of New England. Begun in 1927, beautiful Camp Lawroweld is nestled at the base of several mountains on a 1,000-foot frontage of Lake Webb. It occupies 200 acres of land on which is situated a very impressive lodge built of weathered field stone and solid rock maple logs. In a setting surrounded by wildlife, one may look directly across the lake and view the majestic moose feeding on the soft mosses of the lake bottom.”



Campers on Webb Lake WebPhoto

These words used to describe Camp Lawroweld’s location indicate a high value placed on Webb Lake and the mountain environment. Photos indicate camp programs that utilize the resources of Webb Lake. The camp’s 83 year history and church’s investment in rich architecture further illustrates an environment held in high esteem.

Inns – Webb Lake Kawanhee Inn

From Kawanhee Inn website;



Photographic Images from Kawanhee Inn Website

“The Kawanhee Inn has been hosting wedding celebrations since the early 1930’s. With rustic elegance and breath taking views the Kawanhee Inn provides an unsurpassed setting for your unique celebration. Located on pristine Webb Lake and surrounded by the towering Pines of Mount Blue State Park, the Kawanhee Inn offers a wonderfully refreshing location for your wedding celebration. With mountain views and awe inspiring sunsets our lakeside setting is sure to capture your hearts. Depending on the number of wedding guests you can choose to enjoy your celebration outdoors directly on the shore of beautiful Webb Lake or within the historic main lodge overlooking the lake. As a Maine classic, the Inn’s awe inspiring setting and rustic authenticity is a captivating reminder of New England’s storied past”

These photographs and quotations from the Kawanhee Inn website describe Lake Webb as “pristine” and sunsets over the mountains as “awe inspiring”. This illustrates an environment that is highly valued, magnetic. The Inn’s 60+ year history speaks to enduring qualities that exceed shallow trends.

5.2 Distance Zones

The DeWan report uses the USDA Forest Service visual analysis definitions of foreground, midground, and background for categorizing the level of detail people can detect in forested landscapes. These terms refer to measured distances; foreground – 0 to ½ mile, midground – ½ to 3-5 miles, and background - greater than 3-5 miles.

The report states that, *“Since the windturbines are very large and relatively simple objects, their form and color remain readily distinguishable within the midground and well beyond into the background (up to eight miles from the observer).”*

MLA is in complete agreement with this observation and would highlight that the windturbines’ linear form, light color and rotating motion are readily distinguishable when they are backgrounded by forest vegetation.

Visibility is even more pronounced when windturbines are viewed from below, seen in silhouette, protruding off of hilltops or mountaintops against the open sky.

In describing “background”, the DeWan report states, *“Distances greater than 3-5 miles provide the setting for panoramic views that give the observer the greatest sense of the large landscape. However the effects of distance and haze will obscure surface textures, detailing and form of project components. At this distance objects will be highly visible if they present a noticeable contrast in form or line and if the weather conditions are favorable”.*

The report says that because of the thin design, the ends of the turbine blades will be minimally visible at distances of greater than eight miles. However, because of their height (higher than a 40 story building), form, motion and mountain top location, the remaining components will be highly visible at distances up to eight miles and beyond (within and beyond the USDA Forest Service’s background zone) including Mount Blue State Park and Webb Lake .

6.0 Visual Impacts on Scenic Resources of State or National Significance

This section evaluates three scenic resources of state or national significance within eight miles of the Saddleback Ridge Wind Project using the criteria in the Maine Wind Power Law.

6.3 C. National or State Parks - Mount Blue State Park

General Public Uses.

From the Maine Atlas and Gazetteer ;

“Maine boasts thirty-two state parks. They are spread throughout the state and offer an astounding variety of recreation opportunities. On Maine state parks, there are places to ride mountain bikes, horses, ATV’s and snowmobiles. Many are situated on lakes, ideal for boating, swimming and fishing.”

(Mount Blue State Park)” A lakeside park amongst magnificent mountain scenery.”



Mount Blue State Park Descriptive Road Sign

“Camping, great fishing, swimming, hiking, picnicking, multiuse trails, nature center, boat launching and rentals, showers, dumping station, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, skating, snowmobiling.”

The Maine Atlas and Gazetteer lists 10 recreational activities that may be found in 59 Recreation Areas including National Forests, National Parks, State Beaches and State Parks. Mount Blue State Park is the only Recreation Area on the list that includes all 10 activities (camping, boating, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, fishing, swimming, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, picnic areas).

Of these 59 Recreation Areas, only Acadia National Park, White Mountain National Forest and Baxter State Park are larger.

From Land for Maine’s Future website:

“ Mount Blue State Park, a highly popular park that receives roughly 70,000 visitors each year.”

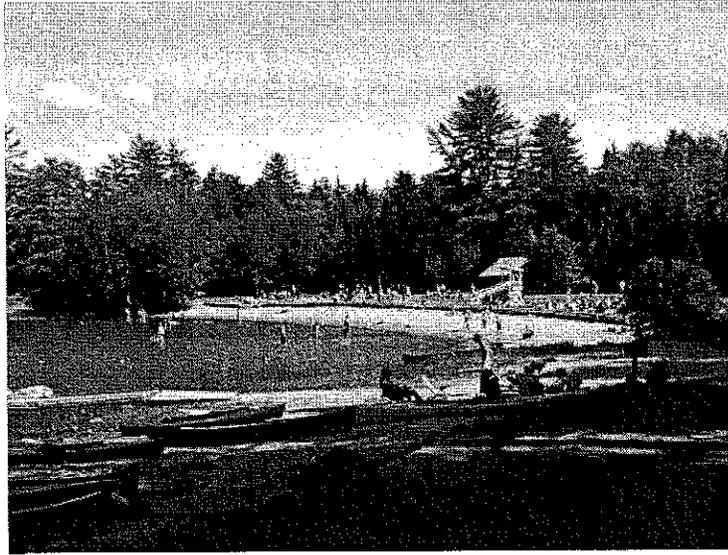
Quotes describing Mount Blue State Park from stateparks.com website:

“ I’ve been coming to this park year after year since I was 4 years old. I have encountered my first bald eagle 2 years ago while enjoying a sandwich at the center hill trail. The views are breathtaking, and the hiking is incredible.”

"We've been going there for 38 years with our family. Now the grandkids are making it their annual vacation. The area is breathtaking."

"I have been going there since I was little and I love it! It's the best state park ever!"

"I have been coming here since I was little, got married here, and we have brought our own children here. We have the warmest memories of Mt. Blue and look forward to one day bring our grandchildren...in the great, great future!"



Webb Beach South

"I grew up going here, & have always lived within 5 miles of this park. it has been a fantastic place for me to grow up & continue to go to as an adult. Just a great place that the local people love!"

"Mt. Blue state park is awesome...My family went every year and I have some of the best memories ever that came out of that park. Always something to do there, never a dull moment. Even as an adult now I still go every year."

"The rangers at Mt. Blue State Park are very helpful and very informative. They go above and beyond to help you find things around the camp. Plus the sites are immaculate!!!"

"One of the most beautiful, neat and clean park in Maine to visit and very relaxing place to visit."

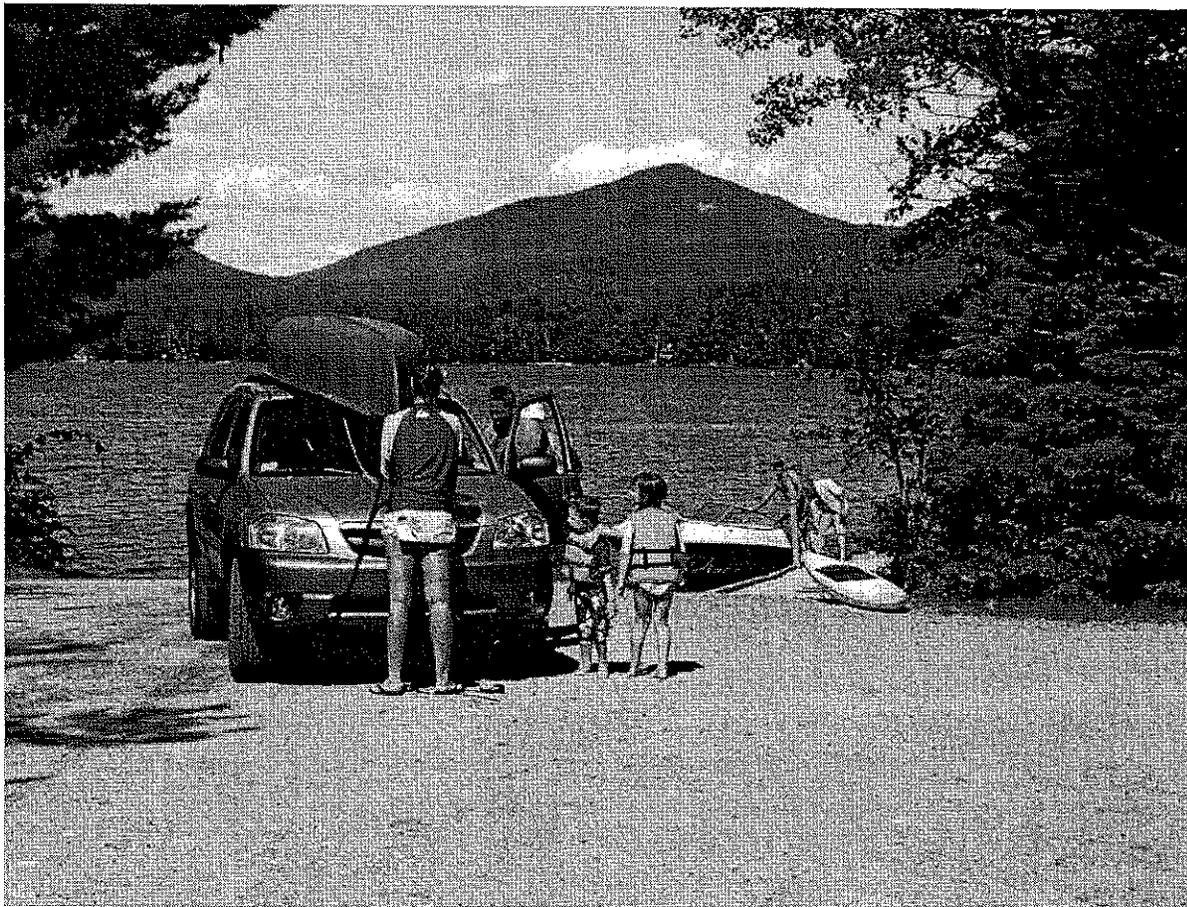
These statements testify to the Mount Blue State Park and area's great scenic beauty. They describe people who return to the area again and again to re-experience its restorative qualities. The greatest demonstration of the value in which people hold the area may be indicated by their desire to confer the experiences of this breathtaking environment to the next generation.

Mount Blue State Park – Webb Beach

Context

Webb Beach consists of approximately one mile of curving sand beach and rocky shoreline on Webb Lake. The beach is part of the western part of Mount Blue State Park.

This side of the park also houses 180 campsites. The shoreline has several twists and turns. Primary orientation is towards Mt. Blue six miles to the east. Trees along the south end of the beach block Bald and Saddleback Mountain views, however those mountains come into full view along the northern portions of the beach. Beach direction in several areas helps direct views toward Bald and Saddleback Mountains 5.7 miles to the Southwest.



Boat Launch at Webb Lake

Significance

This 770 acre parcel is especially important to Mount Blue State Park by providing camping and access to beautiful Webb Lake. The beach slopes very gradually into the water which makes it an ideal and safe environment for children to explore and for parents to supervise. Boat launching is also safe and easy.

Public Uses

Webb Beach is the only public beach on Webb Lake. Mount Blue State Park maintains the beach and offers facilities to encourage people to enjoy the lake including; camping facilities, shower and changing facilities, a shelter, safe swim area marked by buoys, a boat launch and a boat trailer parking lot. In addition, the park rents kayaks and canoes. Mount Blue State Park charges fees to utilize the boat launch.

Viewer Expectations

People who have accessed the beach have experienced a high level of scenic quality while viewing Pope, Hurricane, Little Blue, Mount Blue, Bald and Saddleback Mountains. They expect that same level of scenic quality when they return. Newcomers are attracted by both the recreational activities, and also by the setting. If they were aware of the high level of scenic quality that exists here, they would surely expect that it not be compromised.



Saddleback Mountain from Webb Beach

Project Impacts



Saddleback Mountain from Webb Beach with Windturbines

No towers will be visible from the southern end of Webb Beach. Moving north, the towers become apparent, one after the next until all twelve towers will be become visible in the area adjacent to the campground. At the location where this photo is taken, the closest turbine is 5.7 miles and the furthest is 6.4.

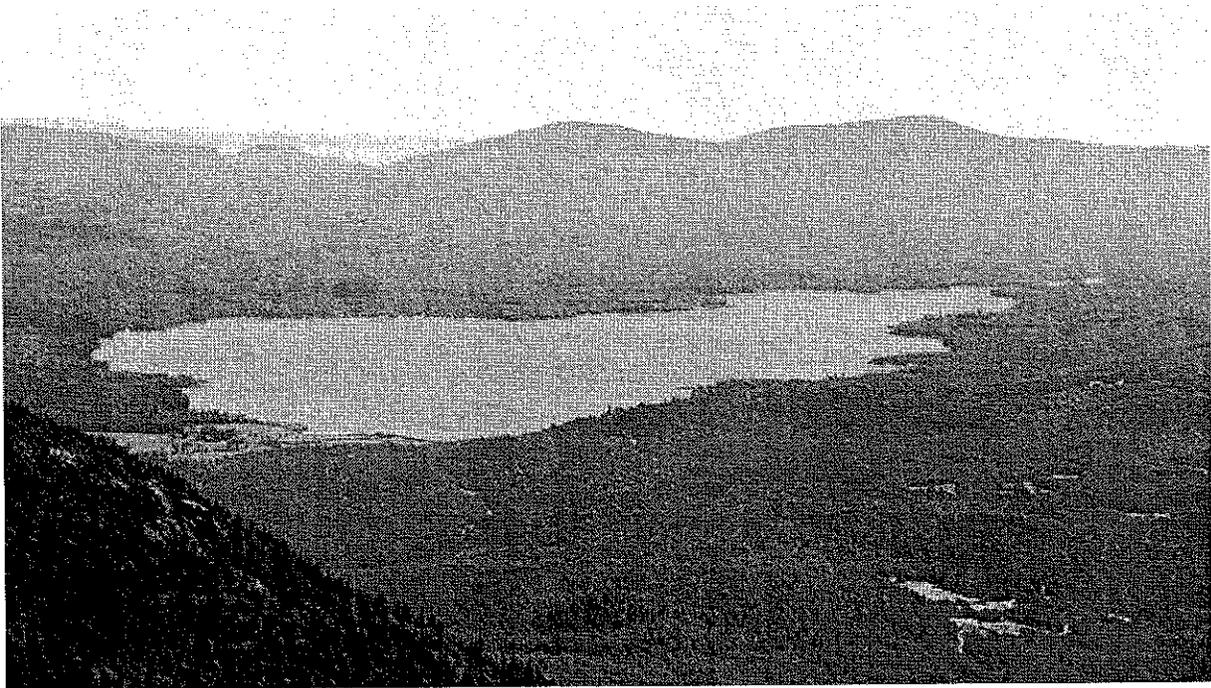
For people sitting and strolling on this part of the Webb Beach, the view of turbines in silhouette along the ridge will present a strong contrast in form, line and color to the powerful humpback shape of South Saddleback Ridge. They will appear as a series of thin needlelike shapes sticking high out of the mountain. Their unnatural shape and spread along the nearly the entire length of the south ridge will severely interrupt the smooth soft form of the south ridge.

Potential Effect on Public Use

The project will have a negative impact on how people experience Webb Beach. While the turbine project may not affect whether some people return to the area including Mount Blue State Park, it will spoil the mountain vista for many people who have been motivated to travel to this somewhat remote location by a desire to, in their words, "be in a pristine wilderness, a rustic setting an awe inspiring setting, a lakeside setting that captures your heart." All of these phrases describe Saddleback Mountain today. None of them would be applicable with the wind turbine project there.

Conclusion

The Project will significantly compromise views from Webb Beach and have an unreasonable adverse effect on the scenic character and uses related to the scenic character of Mount Blue State Park.

Mount Blue State Park - Webb Lake

Webb Lake among the Mountains

Context

Webb Lake and Mount Blue are the two main attractions for Mount Blue State Park as well as the surrounding area. The Lake is an integral and necessary part of Mount Blue State Park, the park simply could not function the way it does without the lake. It is a huge attractor of people to the park and to the area. It has a spectacular setting set within a the semicircle of mountains.

Significance

Webb Lake's size, beauty, and open space give people the opportunity to enjoy mountain views in almost all directions from vantage points all around the shoreline as well as a myriad of locations on the lake itself. The water's light reflecting qualities, wildlife, sounds, smells and feel have a unique ability to inspire and renew the human spirit.

Public Uses

The lake offers a wide variety of year round recreation opportunities including active, water-based like boating, fishing, and swimming as well as more passive pursuits like the pure enjoyment of sitting and listening to the waves.

Viewer Expectations

Viewers on Webb Lake experience being almost completely encircled by forested with an unbroken ridgeline ranging in elevation from 500 to 2800 ft. above the level of the lake. From Webb Lake the mountain compositions are beautiful in every direction. Vistas change as viewers shift position on the Lake. Lake Webb's relative orientation to the movement of the sun and the lake's proportional length running in a northwest-southeast direction subtly draws the viewer's posture and attention towards the southeast. Bald and Saddleback Mountains including the south ridge of Saddleback Mountain and Holman Mountain are positioned in that portion of the vista. People who utilize Webb Lake are expected to have high expectations of scenic beauty.



Saddleback Mountain From Webb Lake

Project Impact.

The towers' unnatural shape, overall height of 443 feet from base to top of rotor and end to end distance of 1.6 miles indicates a project of enormous scale with high visibility from anywhere in the valley that can currently view the South Ridge of Saddleback Mountain. That area includes most of Webb Lake. This location chosen for the turbine project is particularly sensitive as a focus to the long dimension of the lake. The tree-lined lakeshore running in a northwest/southeast direction frames Saddleback Mountain and its south ridge from many places on Webb Lake.

Topography immediately south of the Saddleback Summit drops sharply, 350 ft. in elevation over a distance of 1100 feet and then tapers off to the south ridge. The northernmost turbine's rotor at its highest point will be nearly as high as Saddleback Mountain's summit. The tall industrial looking structures projecting vertically above the mountain ridgeline into the sky will be out of character with the flowing horizontal shape of the mountain below.



Saddleback Mountain from Webb Lake with Windturbines

Potential Effect on Public Use.

The project will have a negative impact on the Webb Lake experience. The turbine project will disturb the natural mountain vista to the southwest. Many people who have been coming here for years on vacation looking to get a respite from the fast pace of modern life and instead begin breathing in the natural beauty in every direction will be offended by the large industrial looking structures topping the mountain ridge. They will experience deep disappointment.

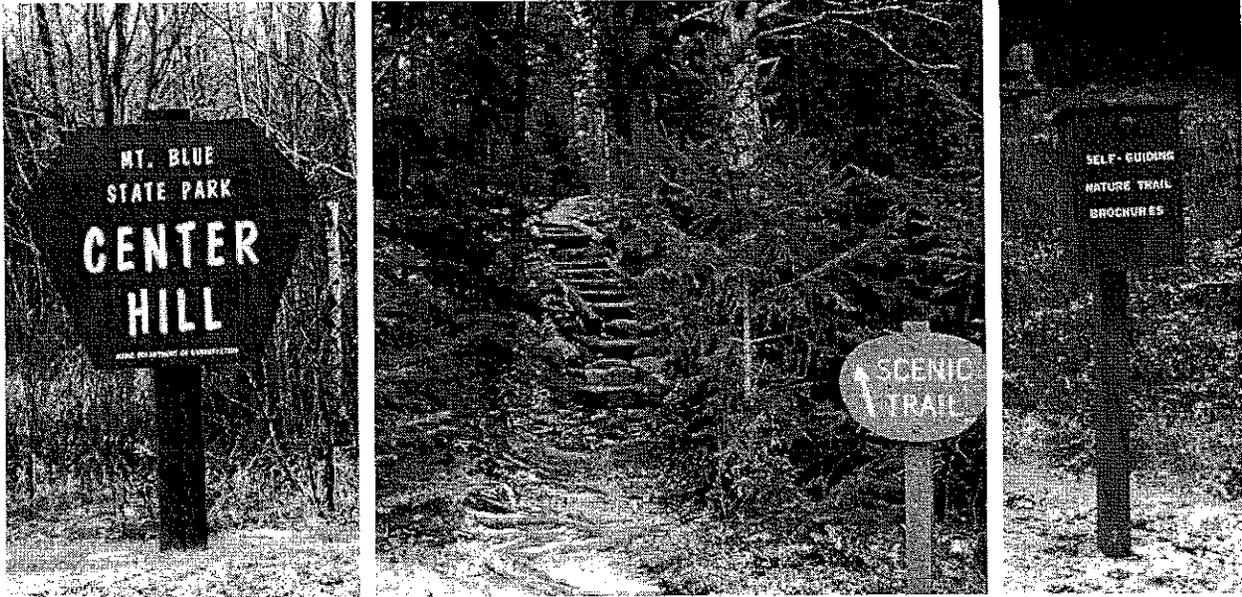
Conclusion

The Project will significantly compromise views from Webb Lake and have an unreasonable adverse effect on the scenic character and uses related to the scenic character of Mount Blue State Park.

Mount Blue State Park – Center Hill Overlook

Context.

The Center Hill Overlook is a popular .2 mile hike on a combination trail/woodland staircase that rewards the hiker with an elevated scenic lake/mountain vista atop a steep cliff surrounded by forest.



Invitations to Experience Center Hill Overlook

Significance.

The trail allows hikers with limited time or ability to have a short, but exceptional climb and enjoy the beautiful vista. Hikers are never far from the convenience of an outdoor toilet facility and small parking area, yet the overlook itself feels wild and remote. The vista includes a near 180 degree sweep looking south-southwest between Saddleback and Spruce to the hills and mountains beyond the Androscoggin River that form the distant horizon. There are very few man-made structures visible, all of modest residential scale. The scene is natural and unspoiled.

Public Uses

Mount Blue State Park offers orientation brochures that help guide the hikers and introduce them to the history of the park and some of its natural features. In this way, the public's use of the trail helps them gain a better understanding of the environment while getting a deeper awareness of the grand beauty and scale of this western Maine landscape



Bald and Saddleback Mountains from Center Hill Overlook

Viewer Expectations.

Viewers who been here before expect to be rewarded with the spectacular vista looking down the throat of the Webb River valley and out over sparkling Webb Lake set within miles and miles of forest covered mountains. Their scenic quality expectations are high. As a first-time visitor, my expectations were far exceeded at the overlook. I generally expect to hike much longer and further in order to enjoy such a magnificent vista.

Project Impact.

The northernmost turbine is proposed to be 7.3 miles from the Center Hill Overlook, the southernmost 8.5 miles away. The towers' contrast with the natural landscape in form, line, color and motion will attract viewers' attention. The line of 12 proposed turbines will set at an acute angle to the Center Hill Overlook so will appear bunched, taking less apparent space in a horizontal dimension. The turbines will have a moderate impact on the scenic vista



Bald and Saddleback Mountains with Turbines from Center Hill Overlook

Potential Effect on Public Use

The turbines will appear out of character in the natural landscape. Because viewers' orientation is more to the southwest, in the direction of the Valley and Webb Lake, the towers will appear left of the center of view. They towers have a detrimental effect on viewers' experience of this wild and natural landscape.

Conclusion

The Project will compromise views from the Center Hill Overlook and have an adverse effect on the scenic character and uses related to the scenic character of Mount Blue State Park.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The Saddleback Wind Project is sited on a mountain ridge that overlooks a unique valley that thousands of people love, cherish and return to over and over for rest and renewal. People who live and visit this place are continually inspired by its natural and scenic beauty, never tiring of looking at the same mountains over and over as seasons and weather transform them into something new every morning.

The DeWan report states that throughout the majority of the study area, views of the wind turbine generators ("generating facilities") are blocked by topography and roadside vegetation.

If visitors are aware of the great scenic beauty in the area, this corridor effect of topography and trees actually raises their expectations to arrive at open places where they can enjoy the views and vistas. This fact confers great value on places like Webb Beach, Webb Lake and the Overlook at Center Hill.

The DeWan report also states that after analyzing several potential locations for wind turbine placement on Saddleback mountain, the applicant has selected sites on the southerly ridgeline that meet the primary energy generating objectives while minimizing potential visual impact to scenic resources, particularly at distance less than three miles.

While I appreciate the work to minimize potential visual impact to scenic resources within the three mile zone, I conclude that because of the Project's size and scale, it will have an unreasonable adverse impact on scenic values and existing uses of Webb Beach and Webb Lake, scenic resources of state significance.

Those scenic resources at both places would be severely compromised by the erection of the 12 turbine wind project along the ridge next to the valley's southern focus, Saddleback Mountain. The place would lose much of its powerful sense of retreat from the busy, work-a-day world and its desirability as a destination for recreation. Quiet, reflective experiences would be compromised by this project of large man-made objects towering above the ridgeline.

