

Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area
Scientific Review Committee
Consensus Recommendations on Adaptive Management Proposal
(SRC Reviewed P163_Alameda County Adaptive Management Plan Proposal II, 06-07-2010)

Developed 15 June 2010 by the Scientific Review Committee¹

The Scientific Review Committee (SRC) reviewed the County of Alameda's proposed plan at the SRC public meeting on June 14-15, 2010. The County of Alameda requested that the SRC review and provide recommendations on the County's proposal (P163_Alameda County Adaptive Management Plan Proposal II, 06-07-2010). The SRC received and considered elements of the two other proposals submitted by the settling parties. Because the settling parties were unable to reach agreement on adaptive management, the SRC considered the various proposals striving to balance the interests of wildlife and wind power. Some of the settling parties participated in the public meeting and discussion on these recommendations.

The SRC provides these recommendations on repowering, hazardous turbine removal, additional studies, and methodology for measuring 50%. The SRC cannot provide assurances that the management actions proposed in the Adaptive Management Proposal will achieve a 50% reduction. The plan can provide a framework to evaluate the 50% reduction and potential subsequent actions if the 50% reduction has not been reached.

Repowering Primary Strategy

The Scientific Review Committee reiterates its recommendation that **repowering with careful turbine siting is the primary strategy to reduce avian mortality** toward a 50% reduction and should move forward as quickly as possible. Without repowering, then the SRC recommends seasonal shutdown and hazardous turbine removal.

Hazardous Turbine Removal

Strategies based on high risk turbine removals should take into consideration the configuration of turbines after the removals. For example, the removal of a HRT ranked moderately high (<9) could create a gap which increases the collision risk of neighboring turbines and discounts the benefit of removal. The plan should aim to remove high risk *situations*, and removals of HRTs ranked <9 should be examined case-by-case. For HRTs ranked 9 through 10, the collision risk is considered sufficiently high that they are always recommended for removal.

Following the relocation guidelines and filling gaps when possible is part of the relocation evaluation. Consistent with the existing proposal, the SRC and staff should periodically re-evaluate turbine rankings to consider how the configuration at the time of the evaluation might

¹ SRC Member Susan Orloff did not participate in developing these recommendations due to illness.

change the hazard ranking of turbines. The configuration shifts frequently as part of regular wind company operation, but would also be affected by filling gaps, removals and relocation established through the proposal.

Relocations should also be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and should avoid areas with burrowing owls as well as HRT addresses.

Credits can be applied to HRT removals when lesser HRTs are removed for repowering and for creating safe flight paths (corridors) and more open space for foraging. Similar credits can be considered for other contexts besides repowering if they create safe flight paths and open space for foraging.

Burrowing Owl and Adjustment Factor Studies

The SRC recommends that the plan heighten the importance of the burrowing owl study and adjustment factor study since these studies are essential to improve understanding and ultimately reduce fatalities. Burrowing owl fatalities have been very significant in the mortality rates. The burrowing owl study is just as important as the monitoring plan for analyzing and interpreting trends and for informing repowering. The management plan should make the burrowing owl study high priority.

Omit the item under 5.e.ii. The search interval should remain set at 30 days.

Methodology for Measuring 50%

The SRC would recommend shifting the methodology to measure 50% reduction for the purposes of this monitoring program.

The 50% reduction should be evaluated annually by comparing mortality estimates between:

- 1) a recommended new baseline defined using the first 3 years of the current monitoring program (bird years 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08), and

- 2) a running average based on the last 3 years. For example, at the end of 2010, the average of bird years 2007-08, 2008-09, and 2009-10 would be compared with the recommended new baseline.

The 50% reduction should be evaluated separately for the four focal species.

The recommended new baseline (2005-2008) is considered to have had similar fatality conditions as the original baseline period (1998-2003), and the recommended new baseline does not rely on assumptions about the uneven sampling in the original baseline study. To the extent possible, the recommended new baseline will be adjusted upward to offset reductions from mitigations occurring between 2003 and 2008, for the purpose of better representing the baseline period.

Each year that the 50% reduction is not met, then the SRC will recommend management actions determined to most effectively reduce fatalities, at a level commensurate with the remaining difference. In order to inform the SRCs recommendations, the County should provide complete information on the management actions conducted to date (i.e. when, where, and which turbines removed or relocated).

The SRC recommends that the metric for measuring a 50% reduction be scaled by bird abundance, as soon as bird abundance data are available.