

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

- Licensee Exhibit 9  
VIA Supplement prepared by Terry DeWan and  
Associates (January 13, 2011)



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January 13, 2011

TO: James F. Palmer, Scenic Resource Consultant  
Mark Margerum, MaineDEP

CC: Andy Novey, Patriot Renewables  
Lindsay Galbraith, Patriot Renewables

RE: **SADDLEBACK RIDGE WIND PROJECT**  
**Visual Impact Assessment**  
**Supplemental Information**



TJD&A has prepared this supplement to the Saddleback Ridge Wind Project visual impact assessment (VIA), dated October 2010, in response to comments from Alan Stearns, the Friends of Maine's Mountains, and James F. Palmer.

#### **I. ALAN STEARNS' MEMO OF DECEMBER 9, 2010.**

In his email correspondence of December 9, 2010, Alan Stearns, Deputy Director of the Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL), requested additional information on the following locations. *His requests are presented in italics.*

##### **Hedgehog Hill Multi-Use Trail**

*DEP should ask the applicant or DEP's consultant to characterize impacts, if any, from the Mount Blue State Park Hedgehog Hill multi-use trail.*

Hedgehog Hill (elev. 1,402) is a sharply defined promontory 2.4 miles southwest of Mt. Blue (elev. 3,200) and 1.1 miles southeast of Center Hill (elev. 1,658). The Hedgehog Hill multi-use trail is shown on the Mt. Blue State Park Cross Country Ski Trails map as the Maple Trail, a 10-mile loop with several points of access. The trail is easily accessed off Temple Road on the southeastern side of the park. BPL has installed a 15'±-diameter teepee with an interior fire ring as a warming hut along the trail. Overnight camping is not allowed.

Hedgehog Hill is a 0.9-mile (approximately 25-minute) walk in from Temple Road over rolling, wooded terrain. The Hill itself is off a steep side trail that rises 100 feet to a wooded summit. Two picnic tables at the top are the only formal improvements. There are no views beyond the immediate foreground along the trail leading to Hedgehog Hill.

The view from the top of Hedgehog Hill is heavily wooded with primarily second growth hardwoods and occasional young softwoods. If there were no intervening vegetation, one or two

turbines would be visible. However, given the presence of the trees, especially during the summer months, it is unlikely that the visitor will be aware of the turbines from this viewpoint. The Project should have no visual impact on the view from Hedgehog Hill. See photographs and computer model on pages 9 – 11 in Appendix A of this supplemental memo.

### **South Shelter Group Camping Areas**

*DEP should ask the applicant or DEP's consultant to characterize impacts, if any, from the South Shelter Group Camping Area in Mount Blue State Park (Webb Lake section).*

The west side of Mt. Blue State Park contains two group camping areas on the shoreline of Webb Lake, one at the north end of the park east of the Nature Center and one at the south end near the boat launch. According to Gary Best<sup>1</sup>, BPL Assistant Regional Director, these are highly popular areas that fill up immediately each year. They are the only campsites within Mt. Blue State Park on or near the lake and are designated for parties of at least ten. Each site features log shelters with picnic tables and fireplaces in wooded settings. Each shelter is located approximately 100 feet from the shoreline and is oriented to the east toward Mount Blue. Both the north and south areas are walk-in sites, requiring a 10-15± minute hike in from the nearest road or parking area.

The South Shelter is located on a 75-foot long sand beach near a protected cove at the southern end of the Park. Access is over a wooded waterfront trail south of the boat launch. The shelter is oriented to the northeast toward Mt. Blue. There are no views of Saddleback Mountain or the Project from either the shelter or the beach. The Project will have no visual impact on the South Shelter group camping area. Photographs from the South Shelter and surrounding area are included in Appendix A to this supplement.

See pages 6 and 7 of this supplement for information on the North Shelter Group Camping Area.

### **Center Hill Overlook**

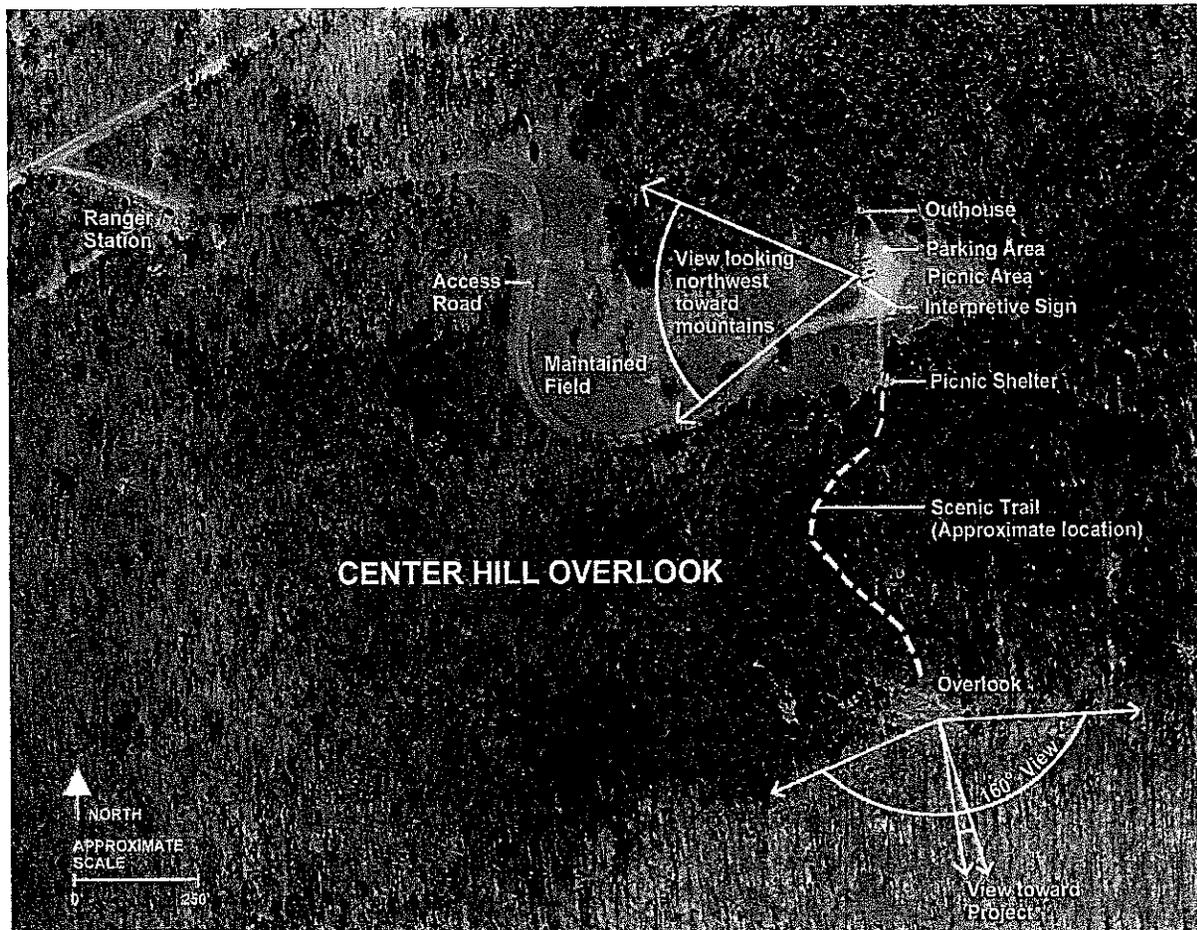
#### **Mt. Blue Farmhouse / Picnic Area / Scenic Turnout**

*DEP should ask the applicant or DEP's consultant to further distinguish or describe the impacts from Center Hill Overlook. The application reads as if views from the vehicle access area are described, but not views from associated pedestrian trails.*

*DEP should ask the applicant or DEP's consultant to characterize impacts from the scenic turnout at the "Farmhouse". This turnout is part of Mount Blue State Park, across the street from the park manager's residence (the Farmhouse), and a key gateway to the park. It may or may not be within eight miles of the turbines.*

What was incorrectly referred to as the Center Hill Overlook in the original VIA for the Project actually described the Scenic Turnout and Picnic Area adjacent to the Mt. Blue Farmhouse and Ranger Station and residence on Center Hill Road. Therefore, this section is provided to correct and supplement the information contained in the original VIA with a description of the Center Hill Overlook.

<sup>1</sup> Gary Best, personal communication January 7, 2011.



### Center Hill Overlook and Scenic Trail, Mount Blue State Park

**Context.** The Center Hill Overlook is a day-use area on the east side of the Park, consisting of a 0.4-mile access road, a gravel parking lot for 20-25 cars, a picnic area with 18± tables, an outhouse, an interpretive sign oriented toward the view to Tumbledown Mountain, a self-guided nature trail, and a log picnic shelter. In addition, a 0.2-mile trail (designated as a 'Scenic Trail') leads from the parking area to a 160°± panoramic view of Webb Lake and the surrounding mountains to the northwest and south.

**Significance.** Center Hill Overlook is one of several locations within Mount Blue State Park that offers panoramic views of the surrounding landscape. The main overlook and picnic area at the top of the access road is oriented west-northwest toward Tumbledown Mountain and Jackson Mountain. Its significance and popularity is due in part to the access road, which provides the general population with a dramatic, managed view without exerting much personal energy. Active vegetation management on approximately 3 acres of land below the parking area keeps the view corridor toward Tumbledown Mountain open. There will be no

views of the Project from the overlook, parking lot, or picnic area. See page 4 of the Appendix to this supplement for photographs from the Center Hill Overlook.

The scenic trail that leads from the parking lot to the view of Webb Lake and the Project provides the opportunity for a panoramic view of the surrounding landscape. The overlook consists of bare rock outcrops above a 1/4-acre clearing. The existing view from this point is illustrated on pages 1 and 2 of the Appendix; a photosimulation of the view with turbines added is provided on page 3 of the Appendix to this supplement. Unlike the overlook at the parking lot, there are no facilities or amenities (e.g., outhouse, interpretive signs, picnic tables) at this location.

**Public Uses.** According to Gary Best, the Center Hill Overlook received approximately 15,000 visitors during 2010. Of these, he estimates that about 10% (approximately 1,500 visitors) walk the scenic trail to the Webb Lake overlook that includes Saddleback Mountain.<sup>2</sup>

Public use of the Center Hill Overlook includes sightseeing, picnicking, hiking, and nature study. Camping is not allowed on the east side of the State Park.

**Viewer Expectations.** People who use both the Center Hill Overlook and the scenic trail are expected to have high expectations of scenic quality.

**Project Impact.** The Project will not be visible from the Center Hill Overlook parking lot or the adjacent picnic area, which are oriented to the north-northwest.

Five of the turbines are within 8 miles of the viewpoint at the end of the scenic trail and will be visible over an arc of 2.5°, or 1.5% of the 160° horizontal view. The photosimulation shown on page 3 of the Appendix illustrates the change in visual character that will result from the construction of the Project.

**Potential Effect on Public Use.** The Project will not be visible from the parking lot and picnic area at the Center Hill Overlook and therefore will have no effect on public use. The Project will have a slight to moderate impact on the public's use and enjoyment of the overlook at the end of the scenic trail, since the turbines would be seen at a distance that is at or near the limit that the legislature considers visual impacts to be 'insignificant' (i.e., eight miles) and would be seen over a relatively small percentage of the overall view.

The view of the wind turbines will present a contrast in form, line, and color in a largely natural landscape. The turbines will be seen as distinct, though minute, objects on Saddleback Ridge. The presence of the turbines may have a negative effect on some peoples' enjoyment of the views from the scenic trail overlook. However, it is likely that an equal number may be drawn to the site for the express purpose of seeing the turbines.

**Conclusion.** Five of the 12 turbines will be located within 8 miles of the scenic trail on the south side of the Center Hill Overlook. The turbines will appear to be relatively small

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<sup>2</sup> Gary Best, personal communication January 7, 2011.

objects in a wide, expansive landscape that is defined by rolling to mountainous terrain. The main focal points for the view are Webb Lake to the southwest and Tumbledown Mountain to the northwest.

The Project will not significantly compromise views from the overlook at the end of the scenic trail at Center Hill Overlook and will not have an unreasonable adverse effect on the scenic character or the uses related to the scenic character of the area.

## **II. FRIENDS OF MAINE'S MOUNTAINS SCENIC CHARACTER REPORT MICHAEL LAWRENCE ASSOCIATES, DECEMBER 2010**

The Friends of Maine's Mountains retained the services of Michael Lawrence Associates (MLA), Essex Junction, Vermont, to prepare a review of the TJD&A VIA that was submitted to the Maine DEP in October 2010 as part of the application for the Saddleback Ridge Wind Project. The MLA report contains several factual errors and raises a number of issues that are addressed in the following section. *The text in italics are quotes from the MLA report, organized by section (the MLA report did not include page numbers).* The text following in standard type is the response by TJD&A.

### *Overview*

#### *Webb Beach*

*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.*

The State Park has approximately 5,950 linear feet of shoreline, most of which is wooded. The MLA report implies that the beach continues for a considerable distance to the north. Webb Beach, the public swimming area that is the most popular destination within the State Park, is approximately 300 feet in length<sup>3</sup>. The photograph in section 1.1 of the MLA report was taken on a sandy shoreline adjacent to the North Group Camping Shelter. This shoreline is at the northern end of an informal trail that parallels Webb Lake in the Park, connecting the north group camping shelter, the picnic area, the main beach, the boat launch, and the south group camping shelter. A map of the west side of Mount Blue State Park is provided on the following page.

*This area of the beach is adjacent to the Mount Blue State Park campground.*

The sandy shoreline pictured in section 1.1 of the MLA report is actually adjacent to the North Group Camping Shelter. The Mount Blue State Park campground is located 0.25± miles southwest of this point.

The North Shelter area is sited approximately 100 feet from a narrow sandy shoreline, 275± feet in length, located at the northerly end of the waterfront trail described above. The log shelter is set back into the woods approximately 100 feet and features a filtered view of Mt. Blue. Neither Saddleback Mountain nor the Project is visible from within the shelter or the woods that surround it.

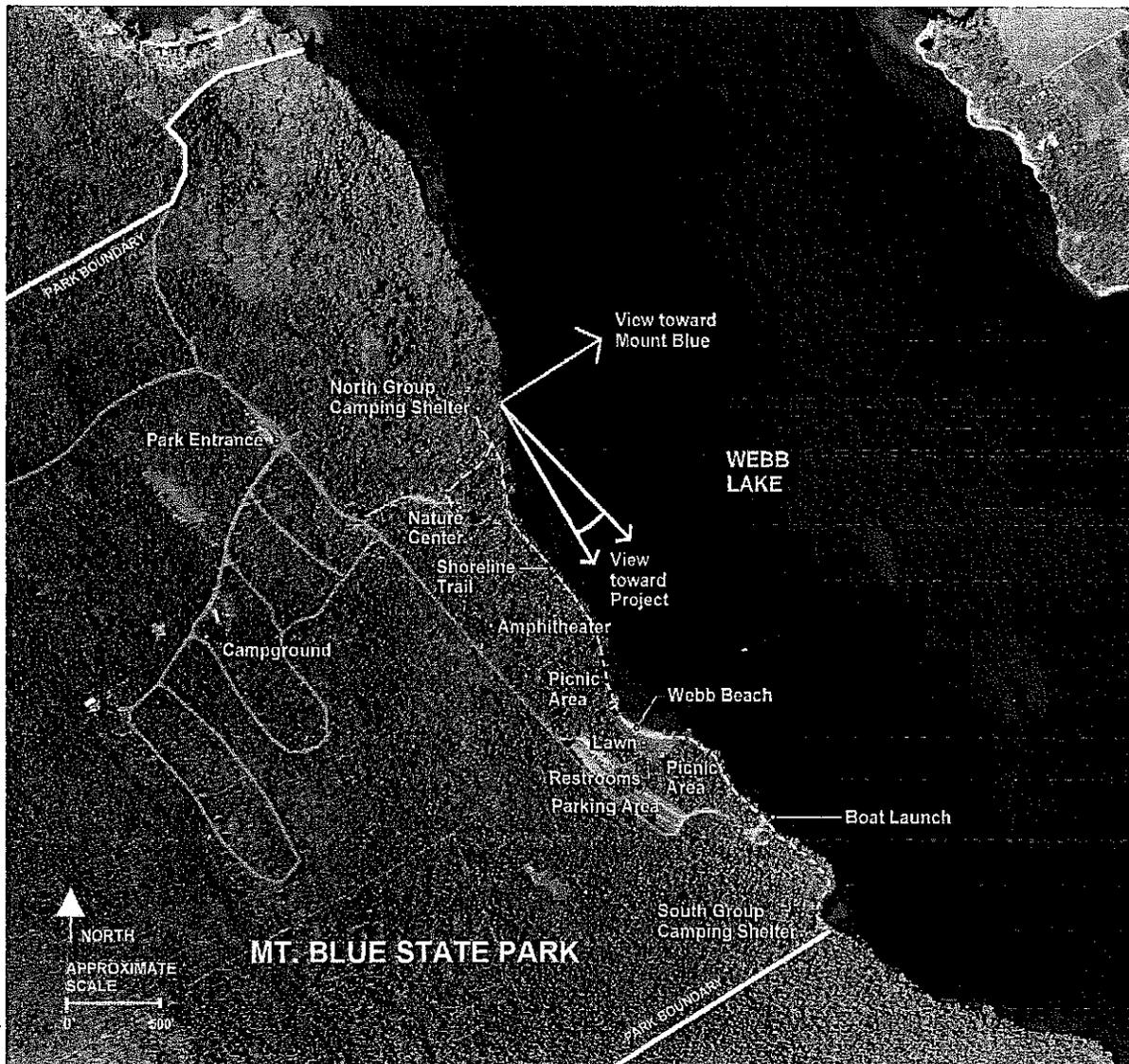
The Webb Lake shoreline at this end of the Park is oriented in a north-south direction, with the distinctive conical profile of Mt. Blue as the focal point to the northeast. The turbines on

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<sup>3</sup> Gary Best, BPL Assistant Regional Director, estimated that 43,000 people visited Webb Beach during the 2010 season.

Saddleback Mountain will be visible looking southeast from the edge of the water at this part of the shoreline at a distance of  $6\pm$  miles. The turbines will be visible over an arc of approximately  $15^\circ$ , which is 8% of the  $180\pm^\circ$  view from the shoreline near the North Shelter area. See photographs and Photosimulation on pages 6 – 8 in Appendix A of this supplement.

According to Gary Best, the North Shelter area received approximately 2,500 visitors last year. Most of these were with the groups that camped at the shelter. The majority of the 70,000 visitors who came to the State Park last year were drawn to Webb Beach (estimated at 43,000 for the 2010 season). The 2,500 people that are estimated to have used the North Group Camping Shelter represent approximately 3.5% of the total visitors to the State Park in 2010.



***Webb Lake***

*Webb Lake is a state significant resource because it is essentially part of Mount Blue State Park.*

The Maine Wind Power Law is very specific with regards to great ponds that are considered scenic resources of state or national significance. In order to qualify, the waterbody in the State's organized area must be identified as having outstanding or significant scenic quality in the "Maine's Finest Lakes" study. Webb Lake was not rated for its scenic quality in "Maine's Finest Lakes" and therefore is not considered a scenic resource of state or national significance.

The west side of Mt. Blue State Park has approximately 5,950 linear feet of shoreline on Webb Lake; however, the lake is not considered part of the State Park acreage. The Maine Conservation Land map layer from the Maine Office of GIS indicates that the edge of the park is the shoreline of the lake.

*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.*

None of the recreation facilities and activities within the Park noted in the MLA report would have views of the Project. The recreational facilities are all located at either the main beach or the boat launch. People who rent or launch boats in the park would have views of the Project from Webb Lake, which is outside the Park boundary.

***Center Hill Overlook***

*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.*

There are two distinct overlooks at Center Hill Overlook. The first view is from a developed parking lot and picnic area on the north side of Center Hill. From this location a 70° view is maintained to the west-northwest toward Tumbledown Mountain and Jackson Mountain. The second viewpoint is at the end of a designated scenic trail (approximately 0.2 miles in length) that starts at the Center Hill Overlook parking area. This viewpoint, which is described in the MLA report and starting on page 3 of this supplement, affords a 160°± view that includes Saddleback Mountain, Webb Lake, and Tumbledown Mountain. For further information see the description and map of the Center Hill Overlook on pages 3 – 5.

### **Conclusions**

*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.*

As noted above, the sandy shoreline at the north end of the State Park is not adjacent to the campground. There is no indication that it is particularly popular with the general population of park users, since less than 4% of the park visitors in 2010 were estimated to go to this end of the park.

### **Project Lighting**

*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.*

The North Shelter Group Camping area is set in the woods approximately 100 feet from the edge of Webb Lake and does not have a view of Saddleback Mountain. The 7± lights from the turbines would be visible to someone on the sandy shoreline at the edge of the 180° view. Webb Beach provides a much better location for stargazing, with its open lawn area that exposes more of the night sky, and would have no view of the turbines.

Scheduled nighttime activities within the park occur at the Amphitheater, which is located in a wooded setting south of the North Shelter Group Camping area and several hundred yards from the Webb Lake shoreline. Facilities at the Amphitheater include built-in benches to accommodate 200± people, a stage, a projection screen, and electricity. The Amphitheater is surrounded by mature trees and would have no views of the turbine lights.

*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.*

There is no camping allowed on the east side of Mt. Blue State Park. The lean-to shelter referred to in the MLA report may have been the group picnic shelter adjacent to the parking lot at the Center Hill Overlook. According to Gary Best, there are no plans to add camping as an activity in the east side of the park.

### ***National or State Parks – Mount Blue State Park***

#### ***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.*

As noted above, the western portion of Mt. Blue State Park (also known as the Webb Beach area) has approximately 5,950 linear feet of shoreline, the majority of which is rocky with little opportunity for water access. Webb Beach (approximately 300 feet in length) is one of the main attractions in the park and features a large parking area, lifeguard stand, restrooms, changing rooms, and a picnic shelter.<sup>4</sup> As illustrated in the photosimulation in the VIA, the turbines will not be visible from Webb Beach.

The North Shelter Group Camping area fronts on a relatively narrow, sandy shoreline that is approximately 275 feet in length. The South Shelter Group Camping area fronts on a narrow beach that is approximately 75 feet in length. (See page 7 for a map of Webb Beach and the North Shelter and South Shelter Group Camping areas.)

##### ***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.*

While no doubt heartfelt, to describe the setting as a ‘pristine wilderness’ is somewhat of an exaggeration. At least three dozen camps are visible along the shoreline of Webb Lake from the Park. Several more are visible on the hillsides above the lake.

The Portland Press Herald ran an article on Bald Mountain (adjacent to Saddleback Mountain) and Webb Lake by Michael Perry on July 29, 2007. In it he writes about development patterns

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<sup>4</sup> The Maine Department of Conservation’s website provides the following description of Mt. Blue State Park and Webb Beach: Spectacular views of Mt. Blue and surrounding mountains ring this lakeside park that boasts a wide variety of activities for park visitors year-round. Located in the mountainous region of western Maine, Mt. Blue State Park offers visitors an extensive network of trails, a sandy beach, popular camping area, boat launch and picnic area. Picturesque Webb Beach is an ideal location for beach-going enthusiasts. [www.maine.gov/cgi-bin/online/doc/parksearch/search\\_name.pl?state\\_park=1&historic\\_site=&public\\_reserved\\_land=&shared\\_use\\_trails=&option=search](http://www.maine.gov/cgi-bin/online/doc/parksearch/search_name.pl?state_park=1&historic_site=&public_reserved_land=&shared_use_trails=&option=search)

along the lake. “An exploration of Webb Lake will not be a solitary wilderness experience. The shoreline has many clusters of summer cottages along it. There is a lot less activity on the lake after Labor Day, but you still may see the occasional jet ski or water skier out in the middle of the lake even in September. The park closes for the season on Sept. 30. Because of all the cottages there are not many spots to land along the shoreline... Wherever you encounter open water leading into a sandy beach you will see cottages.”<sup>5</sup>

The turbines will be visible, at a distance of approximately 6 miles, from a very small portion of the western side of Mount Blue State Park, i.e., from the 275±-foot sandy shoreline near the North Shelter Group Camping area. This represents less than 5% of the total Webb Lake shoreline in the Park.

The group camping areas are by reservation only. The 2,500 people that are estimated to use the North Shelter Group Camping area represent approximately 3.5% of the total visitors to the state park in 2010.

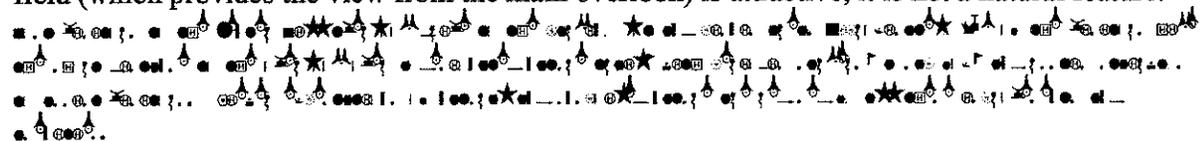
While the turbines will be prominently visible in the distance to someone standing on the shoreline near the North Shelter Group Camping area, they will be screened by vegetation from the waterfront trail and will not be visible from the group shelter itself. From the water’s edge the turbines will be visible at the edge of the panoramic view but will not interfere with the view toward Mt. Blue, which is the primary focal point on the west half of the lake. The turbines should have a slight to moderate effect on the view from the water’s edge and no effect on the view from the land.

**Mount Blue State Park – Center Hill Overlook**

**Context**

*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.*

The approach to the Center Hill Overlook follows the perimeter of a well-maintained, open field, with clumps of white birches as accents. See photograph on p. 4 of the Appendix. While the field (which provides the view from the main overlook) is attractive, it is not a natural feature.



<sup>5</sup> Portland Press Herald. Michael Perry. “For unforgettable scenic vistas – and nice hike, too – head to Webb Lake.” July 29, 2007.

***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.*

See section on Center Hill Overlook / Scenic Trail on pages 3 – 5 of this supplement.

### **III. JAMES PALMER REQUESTS**

#### **PHOTOSIMULATION FROM JAY NILES LIBRARY**

**Memo of January 11, 2011**

Jim Palmer inquired as to whether we would be preparing a photosimulation from the Jay-Niles Library in North Jay. Pages 12 – 14 of the Appendix provide a panoramic view from the front steps of the library, a ‘normal’ view from the same location, and a photosimulation showing the location of the turbines. This illustration shows that up to ten turbines may be visible in leaf-off conditions within 8.0 miles.

#### **VERIFICATION OF HALFMOON POND TURBINE VISIBILITY**

**Memo of January 11, 2011**

Jim Palmer asked for a verification of the tree heights along the perimeter of Halfmoon Pond and a way to verify the relative position of the turbines from the selected viewpoint.

Under most circumstances we assume that trees in view are 40± feet in height. This is a typical average height that takes into account the normal variations experienced throughout Maine. However, along the shorelines of lakes, ponds, and rivers, where the state’s Shoreland Zoning Ordinance prohibits commercial harvesting, we typically use 60 feet as an average tree height. In these situations it is very apparent that the trees along the shoreline are considerably taller than the second growth trees in the woodlots and on the surrounding hillsides. While some white pines, for example, may achieve heights of 70 to 90 feet, we have found that 60 feet represents a reasonable average height for modeling purposes.

TJD&A prepared a line-of-sight cross-section between the point on the west side of Halfmoon Pond and two turbines on Saddleback Mountain. The results of this analysis are provided on page 15 of Appendix A to this supplemental response. The diagram illustrates that the very top of the turbines (i.e., the blades above the nacelle) would be visible above or at the treeline on the horizon. This diagram verifies the photosimulation that was included in the original VIA, which showed portions of several turbines at or just above the treeline.

