

# In the Breeze

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## Senate Bill No. 262

On January 11th 2006, Senator Frank Wagner (R-Virginia Beach) submitted to the General Assembly bill that ultimately passed and has become Virginia's first-ever comprehensive energy bill. This legislation addresses numerous topics that pertain to energy in Virginia including the potential exploration of offshore energy resources, energy standards in state-funded buildings, siting of large-scale energy facilities, and renewable energy production and utilization grant programs. The full text of the bill is available at: <http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?061+ful+SB262ER2>

### Senator Wagner Interview

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2006, several JMU seniors conducted an interview with Senator Wagner regarding his proposed energy bill in an effort to learn about his motivations for the bill and how it would address Virginia's energy position, and specifically how it might address and support wind energy. Highlights of the interview are presented below:

*What is your [Senator Wagner's] motivation for introducing an energy policy for the state of Virginia?*

Long before Hurricane Katrina hit, Senator Wagner became aware of a need for an energy policy in Virginia because, as he states, "energy is way too important to be left without a policy to address it". He went on to explain that foreign policy and military decisions are being based on our country's energy demands and how this energy policy could help combat that social problem.

*Chapter 12 creates a renewable energy grant program; could you explain what the "Division of Energy's" role would be in this program?*

Here, the Division of Energy's role would be managing appropriated funds, collecting grant applications and determining the validity of those applications. Senator Wagner explained that the first step in establishing this new Division of Energy was to "develop the regulatory framework for the Division to give it its legal power."

*In Article 2 of Chapter 9, Siting Wind Energy Facilities: Will such "Wind Energy Facilities" be of a utility scale?*

Senator Wagner stated that utility-scale wind facilities are what he was envisioning here, with a couple of caveats. First, he was concerned with whether or not the power grid would be capable of picking up this newly generated electricity, and secondly, where it would be economically feasible to locate these facilities. As for the latter point, he mentioned the "hilltops of the western part of the state, and within the Chesapeake Bay as potential sources", and mentioned as well some of the potential social problems that would occur with locating wind turbines offshore.

*Local communities often oppose the installation of residential wind turbines in their communities, would you anticipate or recommend any language in the bill that would address this?*

Senator Wagner explained that he addressed this issue in his original bill, and included language that would prevent a homeowner's association from prohibiting such installations. The Senator went on to say that he would revisit the language to ensure that residential installations are protected.

To hear the 30 minute interview in its entirety, please see our website.

The Virginia Wind Energy Collaboration was created to educate the public and inform decision-makers about wind energy development in Virginia, in support of the Commonwealth's need for reliable and affordable energy, environmental quality, and economic development.



### Highland County Update – Mark Lotts

The Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC) held public hearings in Monterey in mid-March to gather input from local residents with respect to their opinions about the proposed Highland New Wind Development (HNWD) project and from experts on the subject of utility-scale wind power in general, the project and its potential impacts. The SCC is presently awaiting an environmental impact review statement from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and is slated to hold additional hearings in Richmond in May. The project could be approved, approved with conditions, or denied a permit for necessity and convenience by the SCC. A final verdict is anticipated during Summer 2006. If approved, Highland New Wind Development aims to complete construction of the 39-Megawatt project by the end of 2007.

### Wallops Update

A feasibility study for NASA Space Flight Center at Wallops Island was conducted between October 2004 and March 2006. Since then, a VWEC team has been analyzing the data collected, developing a summary analysis, and recently finished correlating that data to measurements from nearby airports. This correlation determines whether the wind speeds recorded on Wallops Island were higher or lower than average. An analysis was also developed using special software to predict a localized wind resource grid. Finally, potential turbine sites and power curves were considered to estimate annual energy production and to develop an economic analysis. A final report of the study will be completed in June with presentation to the NASA Space Flight Center to follow.

### VSWIP Update

The third round of awards from the Virginia Small Wind Incentives Program (VSWIP) was announced this past January. Grants were awarded to Winchester Montessori School in Winchester, VA; Volvo Trucks, in Dublin, VA; Richard Murphy in Stuarts Draft, VA; David Weatherly in Chesapeake, VA; Martha Gross and Oscar Moncada in Virginia Beach, VA; and finally Scottie's Place with land in Giles County. The grants offset a portion of the installed cost of a wind turbine by one-third the total installed cost up to \$10,000. This round of applications concludes the grant portion of the pilot program; however, we are still continuing to work with the awardees to assist in installing their turbines. For information regarding the status of the installations, please visit our website at [http://vwec.cisat.jmu.edu/vswip\\_program.htm](http://vwec.cisat.jmu.edu/vswip_program.htm).