



# Readers' Turn to Write: The negative environmental impact of industrial-scale wind projects

By GARY ABRAHAM January 30, 2026



File photo



The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has issued a statement about the 99-mile Constitution Pipeline, which would carry natural gas to New York City. The state's grid operator is projecting blackouts, including later this year, because the city doesn't have enough power. NYSDEC says it will vigorously scrutinize the environmental impacts of the proposal: "New York will continue to take the reins to ensure the full protection of public health and our state's natural resources."

I want to know why the state is casting a blind eye on the environmental destruction caused by large-scale wind and solar projects.

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To its credit, the DEC put on a valiant effort to save endangered bald eagles, the upland sandpiper and the nearly extinct Northern long-eared bat, all of which have been found in the Alle-Catt wind project area. But DEC's arguments and even its regulations were set aside by the state power plant Siting Board. Since then, the Siting Board has been replaced by the Office of Renewable Energy Siting, which is much less environmentally minded.

Towns asked to host these projects have land-use laws in place, including zoning, to designate where industrial projects could be sited and where they can't. But ORES has waived such local laws in every case and has refused to allow any town in New York to become a party to the siting proceeding.

In the Alle-Catt case, the hearing officers who received testimony and evidence from DEC experts and the experts brought by other state agencies, by local stakeholders who intervened, and by Alle-Catt, concluded the environmental damage the project would cause is serious:

- “[B]etween 480 and 515 bird fatalities annually,” including six threatened or endangered species and at least 41 additional bald eagle fledglings will be killed by collision with wind turbine blades over 30 years.
- Between 26,000 and 39,500 bats will be killed over 30 years, including two threatened or endangered species (even the application acknowledges that local bat populations will not survive the wind turbines).
- The project would remove 1,550 acres of interior forest and would fragment about 1,686 acres of unbroken forest that would remain of the “approximately 5,900 acres of interior forest in the facility site.”
- “The presence of wind turbines may: displace grasslands birds from otherwise suitable habitat; decrease nesting success; and change foraging behavior,” particularly for the threatened upland sandpiper.

These losses of birds, bats and insects have the potential to harm farming in the region, as these animals provide “ecosystem services,” chiefly pollination and the control of agricultural pests.

This project, like most wind projects in New York, will cause a public health risk for those exposed to wind turbine noise. That was the testimony of the state Department of Health. The state siting board rejected that testimony, as well as NYSDEC's, which would have forced turbines to be relocated to avoid those outcomes.

Pipelines fail but it's a very rare occurrence. For a 100-square-mile wind energy project, the killing of bats, birds and insects is a certainty. So is the loss of more than 4,000 tons of carbon dioxide each year for more than a century. That's how long it will take to regrow forests in Yorkshire, Arcade, Freedom, Farmersville, Centerville and Rushford cleared by Alle-Catt.

Additional environmental damage will be caused: 75-foot paths through the forest to interconnect 87 turbines require “174 stream crossings and an estimated total of 1,982 linear feet of permanent stream impacts.”

There are dozens of wind projects like Alle-Catt across Upstate New York, approved or about to be approved (New York has never denied a permit for a wind project) in the vain hope that doing so will have an effect on global warming. Because they operate only about 25% of the time, two or three always-on, reliable nuclear power plants could replace them all with zero-emissions power generated on a site the size of a shopping mall.

No alteration of drainage patterns, no killing of wildlife and no nuisance noise.

Nuclear will be built out in the next decade in New York full protection of public health and our state's natural res

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jacking up our electric bills even now) that can play no more than niche role in addressing global warming.

*(Gary Abraham is an environmental attorney who lives in Humphrey. He has represented municipalities and local environmental groups in large-scale wind and solar project permitting before state and local agencies around the state for 25 years, including four groups in the Alle-Catt case.)*



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