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### **Wind Farm Threatens Cypress Hills**

Concerned Albertans will have another chance to voice their opposition to the proposed Wild Rose Wind Farm in the Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park Fringe Area 45 km southeast of Medicine Hat in Cypress County. On September 23, 2007, Naturener Energy Canada Inc. purchased 100 percent of the shares of Alberta-based West WindEau Inc., the original project proponent. Naturener subsequently withdrew the project application because the turbines will be louder than the manufacturer had originally stated.

Naturener has re-applied, using the same documentation as for the previous application. The Environmental Impact Statement for Wild Rose 1 Project was approved in May 2008, and a public open house is planned for 2009. The plan includes 82 turbines, each 80 m tall with 38-m blades.

Although AWA supports alternative energy development, such development is not always as “green” as it may appear. Since the leased land base for the wind farm proposal has not changed, AWA has the same concerns as with the original application. Because the Cypress Hills are an ecological island in the midst of an ocean of grassland, the species that live here are particularly vulnerable, and a protected buffer zone is critical to their continued protection.

This development would seriously degrade the area’s natural features. New roadways required for construction and maintenance of the turbines would introduce non-native species, and bird mortality from the turbines could lead to the elimination from the area of species such as the endangered burrowing owl. The ecological values of this significant, largely intact area of native prairie should not be compromised for an industrial development that could be placed in more appropriate locations on land that is already disturbed. Such locations have equal or greater potential for economically viable wind farms.

– *Joyce Hildebrand*

