



# **A LANDSCAPE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM:**

## **Addressing Environmental Issues Associated with Utility-Scale Wind Energy Development In Virginia**

Prepared by the  
Environmental Working  
Group<sup>\*</sup>  
of

The Virginia Wind Energy  
Collaborative

Dan Boone, Judy Dunscomb,  
Rick Webb, Christina Wulf

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\* Contact information for coauthors is provided in Appendix 1. Note that the landscape classification system presented in this document and in the associated maps is presented as a product solely of the VWEC Environmental Working Group and is not intended to represent the views of the Virginia Wind Energy Collaborative participants.

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***Cautionary note to report users:***

The purpose of this report is to promote responsible and informed decisions concerning the siting of utility-scale wind energy projects. The authors believe that it is essential for the Classification System contained within this document and the associated GIS database to be maintained and presented with the report's other contents, which provide context, review environmental concerns, identify gaps in existing scientific information, and describe potential impacts that may be realized from inappropriately sited wind energy development. The complete report should be viewed as an integrated whole.

## FOREWORD

The VWEC Environmental Working Group was established to develop a landscape classification system to identify areas that should be considered unsuitable for wind project siting, to identify areas with known environmental sensitivities, and to highlight the need for effective environmental review and assessment prior to wind project siting and development. The Environmental Working Group developed an initial draft of the landscape classification system document and held a peer review meeting in December of 2003 involving representatives of the environmental community and resource management agencies.

Broad consensus was reached on the fact that the identification of areas of environmental sensitivity would be beneficial to environmental groups as well as wind developers, State and local agencies, and citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The landscape classification system presented in this document and in the associated maps is presented as a product solely of the VWEC Environmental Working Group and is not intended to represent the views of the Virginia Wind Energy Collaborative participants.

Although this landscape classification system project is complete as presented, a number of topics have not been fully addressed. In addition, more information on a number of issues will become available as ongoing research and studies are completed. Thus it is appropriate for the landscape classification system project to be viewed as a work in progress. The members of the VWEC Environmental Working Group intend to continue work on the project, and the participation and input of all interested parties is invited.

This document is intended neither to champion nor condemn utility-scale wind energy development. The Environmental Working Group does not oppose the development of wind energy resources. The Group has been guided by the Precautionary Principle, wherein "if we have reasonable suspicion of harm, accompanied by scientific uncertainty, then we all have a duty to take action to prevent harm".

We hope that our effort will contribute to the success of the VWEC mission to promote balanced wind energy development in Virginia

*The VWEC Environmental Working Group*

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