

Double Standard: If You're a Greenie, You Can Kill Golden Eagles



Katie Pavlich

News Editor, Townhall

Jan 06, 2012 07:16 AM EST

Apparently going green isn't as "environmentally," or should I say as animal friendly as you would think it should be. The feds are thinking over the idea of allowing an Oregon wind farmer to [legally kill protected](#) Golden Eagles. Currently, killing a Golden Eagle will cost you at least \$5000 and you in prison for a year.

The federal government is proposing to grant a first-of-its-kind permit that would allow the developer of a central Oregon wind-power project to legally kill golden eagles, a regulatory move being closely watched by conservationists.

The Interior Department's Fish and Wildlife Service on Tuesday released a draft environmental assessment that would allow West Butte Wind Power LLC to kill as many as three protected golden eagles over five years if the company fulfills its conservation commitments.

It's the first eagle "take permit" application to be received and acted on by U.S. Fish and Wildlife under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. ("Take" means to kill, harass or disturb the birds, their nests or their eggs.)

The permit, if ultimately issued, stipulates that there must be no net loss to breeding populations of golden eagles from the wind farm project. That means for every protected bird permitted killed, developers must contribute to conservation efforts for breeding them.

"Our goal is to maintain stable or increasing populations of eagles protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act," said Chris McKay, assistant regional director for Migratory Birds and State Programs in the Fish and Wildlife Service's Pacific Region.

"Regulations under the Act allow us to issue permits for activities that are likely to take eagles provided the activity is otherwise lawful and the taking is not the purpose of that activity, the take is unavoidable even though advanced conservation practices are being implemented, and the take is compatible with eagle preservation," McKay said in a press release.

California-based West Butte Wind Power LLC is proposing to build a 104-megawatt wind energy generation facility on rangeland in Oregon's Deschutes and Crook counties, consisting of up to 52 wind turbines. Electricity generated by the project could power as many as 50,000 homes.

Conservation groups expressed cautious optimism at the government's proposal to award the eagle take permit.

"This is a type of project where it's appropriate for them to issue this kind of permit," said Liz Nysson, energy policy coordinator with the Oregon Natural Desert Association. She noted that only a small number of golden eagles are believed to be in and around the area where the wind turbines will be built.

I highly doubt the same exceptions would be given to developers of the Keystone Pipeline. But the killing of protected birds wouldn't stop at just three in five years. Wind farms kill thousands of endangered and protected birds [on a daily basis.](#)