

Wind farm development can be powerful, as long as proper design is implemented

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Wind energy helps alleviate some of the environmental concerns about burning fossil fuels, but wind farms also introduce their own problems related to wildlife conservation, including habitat loss and mortality to birds and bats. With proper planning and design, though, wind energy production can address ecological concerns and still achieve development goals, according to a study published in the Oct. 26 issue of the online journal *PLoS ONE*.

The work, led by The Nature Conservancy's Kansas chapter, reports an analysis of wildlife sensitivities in Kansas, describing how wind development could proceed while still meeting conservation goals for no-net-loss of wildlife.

The researchers identified areas that should be avoided to protect unique habitats and wildlife populations (such as prairie-chickens and the whooping crane), and quantified the level of "offset projects" that would be required to make up for any ecological effects of development in the remaining area. The resulting proposal suggests that approximately 10 million hectares (about 50% of the state) could be developed for wind energy, potentially producing up to 478 [gigawatts](#) of energy, while still meeting conservation goals.

According to the authors, "wind energy can be developed in a way that is compatible with wildlife. Even after avoiding critical habitats, there are tens of millions of acres in Kansas suitable for wind energy". Such wildlife-friendly wind development could produce enough energy to far

exceed the goal of producing 20% of the United States' energy from wind power by 2030.

More information: Obermeyer B, Manes R, Kiesecker J, Fargione J, Sochi K (2011) Development by Design: Mitigating Wind Development's Impacts on Wildlife in Kansas. PLoS ONE 6(10): e26698. [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0026698](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0026698)

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