

A Hike up Rumford Whitecap

by Brad Blake

On Sunday, October 3, Stephen Watson and I made a pilgrimage up Rumford Whitecap Mountain in Oxford County. I say pilgrimage because this is a stunning and unique mountain, one of the lowest elevations to find sub-arctic flora in the state. It has sweeping 360 degree views from its open ledges. It has always been a favorite hike to me and this year was special, as it is likely the last time to hike this gem and see the viewshed unsullied by industrial wind turbines. I have posted a series of photos, with captions, in this blog. [Read on....](#)

Rumford Whitecap is so highly regarded that, after years of negotiation, the Mahoosuc Land Trust was able to purchase part of the summit and ensure access. See the Mahoosuc Land Trust link:<http://www.mahoosuc.org/whitecap.html> The Land Trust spent a lot of money on the project, with \$243,000. coming from the Land for Maine's Future Fund---that is taxpayers' money. Yet in spite of the state voting in excess of \$200 million of face value plus interest on Land for Maine's Future bonds, the state is promoting industrial wind turbine sites all around these "extraordinary" and "special places" that were purchased for the people, by the people, to preserve.

At Rumford Whitecap, starting just 3 miles to the north, is Partridge Peak, Flathead Mt., and Record Hill, site of Independence Wind's Record Hill Project. The roads created in 2009 by this developer are clearly seen in the photo. It will be the site of 22 turbines. Immediately adjacent to the summit of Rumford Whitecap are North & South Twin Mts. and Black Mt., which First Wind proposes for its "Longfellow" project of 20 turbines. Directly east, across the Androscoggin River Valley, is Spruce Mountain in Woodstock. Patriot Renewables will erect 11 to 17 turbines on that prominent ridge. Looking to the northeast beyond the towns of Rumford and Mexico are two more Patriot Renewables sites: Saddleback Ridge in Carthage for 20 turbines and an equal number in Dixfield on Col. Holman Mt.

If all these proposed projects get built out, this wonderful, stunningly scenic place we have spent public tax money to preserve will have around 100 huge industrial wind turbines surrounding it. It will be ruined forever. I ended my hike that day bittersweet, with the usual hikers' bliss of having climbed into another world of grand vistas, offset by the heartbreak of knowing that should any wind turbines destroy the vista of Rumford Whitecap, I shall never return.



The view north is directly at Partridge Peak, Flathead Mt. and Record Hill, the site of Independence Wind's project.



Black Mt., with its At & T tower, is a half mile away. To the right, you can see a met tower belonging to First Wind, which wants to erect 20 turbines on Black Mt. and North and South Twin Mts to the north. These 3 mountains are separated from the 3 mountains of Independence Wind's project just by a notch. A string of six peaks will be blasted away and twenty two 400 foot tall wind turbines will top them.



The higher ridges in the distance, within 5 miles beyond Rumford and Mexico, are Saddleback Ridge and Col. Holman Mt., where Patriots Renewables wants to place more turbines.



Across the valley in Woodstock is the long ridgeline of Spruce Mt., where Patriot Renewables will erect 11 to 17 (likely more) turbines, clearly visible from nearly a mile of the trail up Rumford Whitecap, after the trail breaks out of the forest and onto the ledges leading to the summit.



View towards Mt. Washington, the high distant peak. How many of these ridgelines will be threatened in the future for the folly of industrial wind? Look closely and you see faintly the trails on the Whitecap part of Sunday River Ski Resort. There is a strong citizens movement in Bethel and Newry to protect the tourism of the area by adopting wind ordinances.



The high peak that is blue in the distance is Baldpate. The Appalachian Trail goes across the entire open ridgeline, with distant views of all the turbines that will surround Rumford Whitecap.



The peak in the distance is Old Speck Mt. in nearby Grafton Notch State Park. The views from the State park will also include most of the turbines. The ridges in the foreground could become targets of the wind developers.

I lived near Bethel in the 1970's, when I first discovered Rumford Whitecap. In more than 40 years, I have hiked the entire length of the Appalachian Trail in Maine and climbed just about every major mountain with a trail on it and some with no trails. I have been awed by the spectacular beauty of Maine's mountains and charmed by the subtle vignettes of nature that abound. I strongly believe that industrial wind power development in Maine is a travesty that we will come to regret. I am angry that the political climate of today has allowed such unjustified destruction of rural Maine to take place. Please join in the efforts to save Maine's vaunted "Quality of Place". Hike Rumford Whitecap, Tumbledown, Bigelow, and the other great places before they are surrounded by wind turbines. You owe it to your soul. Brad Blake