

GOING GREEN IN TEXAS –ENVIRONMENTAL COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

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Texas currently leads the nation in wind turbine development and is now posed to develop one of the most ambitious green energy projects in the nation. Within the next five years, approximately 2,200 miles of new electrical transmission lines would be built to carry wind generated energy from the western part of the state to more eastward cities and towns. The new transmission line corridors would be between 100-160 feet wide, and once constructed, be maintained typically as clear zones. As currently proposed, the project would affect approximately 55,000 acres of ranch land, farmland, and most importantly, native plant communities, some of them rare, and practically all of which sustain wildlife. This talk focuses on two aspects of this issue: One is the potential impacts of this project on the natural environment, particularly native plant communities, endangered plants, and threats posed by the introduction of invasive species. The other is how these potential impacts can be addressed by the plant conservation community to offset them.