

[Deja vue all over again](#)

Written by [Don Hendershot](#)

Friends of Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge just finished waving goodbye to the Navy, its fighters and their outlying landing field only to turn around and see seeds planted that would sprout 500-foot tall wind turbines, each with a blade sweep of about one acre, in almost the same location as the proposed landing field.

The Friends of Pocosin was created in 2008 from the outpouring of grassroots support garnered by North Carolinians Opposing the Outlying Landing Field. One would think it would be simple to rekindle the passions of those myriad and diverse supporters that included individuals, elected officials, town and county governments, hunt clubs, businesses, civic organizations and environmental organizations that faced down the Navy. But there are some wild cards to consider.

One is timing. This industrial wind project dubbed the Pantego Wind Facility is apparently on the fast track. If things click the way corporate interests would like, 49 acres of cuisinart blades could be churning in the skies next to Pocosin Lakes when hundreds of thousands of waterfowl, including about 60 percent of the entire population of tundra swans, return to the area in 2012.

Another factor is marketing. The NAVY is the NAVY, and the Navy is an integral part of the nefarious government and there's little difficulty in stirring up opposition to almost anything government-related. However, for many in rural eastern North Carolina, Pantego has a nice ring to it. After all Pantego is a small, rural community in Beaufort County with a population of around 170, according to the 2000 census. But what is Pantego Wind Energy LLC? It is a subsidiary of Invenergy, a Chicago-based energy corporation that is one of the five largest (and the No. 1 one independent) owners of wind generation plants in the U.S. This corporation with more than \$130 million in assets wants you (and me) to subsidize their Pantego Wind Facility. This might be a good time to interject that there are at least 14,000 abandoned wind projects across the U.S. It seems that after subsidies were exhausted and profits didn't materialize, these farms were simply abandoned.

So in these money-strapped times Invenergy (AKA Pantego Wind Energy LLC) is intimating that Beaufort County government could see \$1 million annually in tax revenue. Plus there would be lease agreements with a few local farmers and after 100 jobs during construction, Invenergy is promising a whopping 5 full-time jobs to tend the turbines. But money is money

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and according to local news reports Tom Thompson of the Beaufort County Economic Development Commission is already endorsing the plan and Invenergy reports already having signed at least 20 leases with area farmers.

And about all that energy, it's a drum I intend to keep beating until wind developers and their supporters decide to come clean and be honest with the public. The Pantego projects calls for 49 1.6 MW (megawatts) turbines to be built. They are touting 80 MW of electricity — enough, they say to power 15,000 homes. The fact is, the actual generating capacity will be much closer to 26 MW and perhaps the ability to power 5,000 homes.

Some that helped de-wing the Navy are still on alert. Derb Carter of the North Carolina Office of the Southern Environmental Law Center and Robert Scull of the Cypress Group of the North Carolina Sierra Club spoke out against the proposal at a Nov. 17 meeting of the Utilities Commission in Washington, D.C.

From my point of view, however, we are missing one of the strongest players that took the lead in aborting the Navy's plans to infringe upon what many biologists and environmentalists call North Carolina's Serengeti — that part of eastern North Carolina that rivals the majestic migrations of Africa's Serengeti. Audubon North Carolina (ANC) was at the forefront in protecting Pocosin Lakes and its environs. To date, I have found one mention of ANC's stance regarding the Pantego facility. It was a very thoughtful and clear pronouncement from ANC's, Curtis Smalling, Important Bird Areas (IBA) Coordinator (39 of the 49 planned turbines are sited on ANC IBAs). in a brochure from Friends of Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. The brochure can be seen at www.pocosinlakesfriends.org.

In a kind of summation, Smalling writes: "Area is highly sensitive and if permitting moves forward, the bar must be very high on showing that impacts are minimal, mitigated, and that adaptive management is in place to correct any problems that arise (if the facility makes it to construction)." Searches of ANC's website and blog site, however, (as of early Nov. 21) made no mention of the Pantego Wind facility.

National Audubon appears to be quite fervent in their support of wind power. But the caveat has been responsible siting. Pocosin Lakes is the perfect place for Audubon to step forward and show unequivocally that their support of wind power does not supersede their support of wildlife, wildlife habitat and wild places.

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To find out how you can make your voice heard regarding the Pantego wind project contact Larry Hodges at (available at source) or at [hodgeswas at aol dot com](mailto:hodgeswas@aol.com).

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