



Visual Communications for Wind Energy Development

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As a sight-driven species, 80 percent of our experiences are mediated through our eyes; only 7 percent of the impact comes from the words we speak. Humans innately think, create, and respond in a visual world. Our society is becoming ever more visually oriented as a result of television, the Internet, and other modern media. Although we may be aware of the importance of visualization in our daily lives, we tend to forget what a powerful communications tool it can be for wind energy development.

Using visualization during the design and permitting process leads to more creativity and thus enhanced problem-solving. Visualization allows a greater audience to understand the information, so that a more productive dialogue can ensue among project stakeholders such as landowners, planning and zoning commissions, agency staff, private partners, and the general public. Visualization of what is yet to be built can also prevent hidden surprises, help discover unforeseen challenges, and reduce personal interpretation.

Visualization means more than “pretty pictures.” Effective visualization can be achieved through one of several possible formats, including photo simulations, animations, line of sight analysis, viewshed analysis, and shadow flicker studies. Its effectiveness comes from creating engaging, self-explanatory images that are more memorable and informative than written text or spoken words. By considering actual lines of sight and integrating existing vegetation, for example, the visualization process can communicate the visual impact that a proposed wind farm will have at a particular location.

Successful visualization requires both technical and artistic expertise. State-of-the-art computer programs provide a level of accuracy and realism not seen in traditional sketches and plans. Today’s software can take into account distances, changing scales, and even topography, which historically was difficult to express. The aesthetic component involves careful and thoughtful placement of objects and the use of lighting to create a realistic depiction of the project. By combining artistry with technology, visualization integrates actual site features and visual conditions with elements of the proposed project to ensure that it is understood and to demonstrate that it has been carefully planned.

As the old adage goes, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” Communicate your vision through visualization.



Visualization can demonstrate the impact of a proposed wind farm from perspectives on multiple scales, from an individual farm to an entire landscape.