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# Updating Minnesota's 3x5 Wind Access Buffer

Minnesota Public Utilities Commission  
September 16, 2025

# Current Policy: 3x5 Wind Access Buffer

- Collectively referred to as the 3x5 Wind Access Buffer (WAB), current practice requires a 5 rotor-diameter setback in the prevailing wind direction and a 3 rotor-diameter setback in the non-prevailing wind direction.
- Given technological improvements, growing turbine size, and demand for Minnesota-grown energy, this policy significantly limits where turbines can be placed.
- States like Illinois, Michigan, North Dakota and South Dakota have adopted more practical standards based on turbine height using a 1.1 Blade Tip Height Multiplier.



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# Key Reasons for Reform

- **Maximize Land Efficiency:** Moving to a 1.1x height setback allows Minnesota to responsibly site more wind turbines on available land, harnessing our energy potential without compromising safety or aesthetics.
- **Reduce Infrastructure Costs:** Updating siting practices would reduce infrastructure costs via shorter access roads, shorter collection wires between turbines, and less disruption to underground farm drainage systems.
- **Drive Local Prosperity:** Practical setback policies enable higher project capacity, delivering increased production tax revenue directly to county and township governments, creating family-supporting jobs, and attracting investment to rural Minnesota communities.



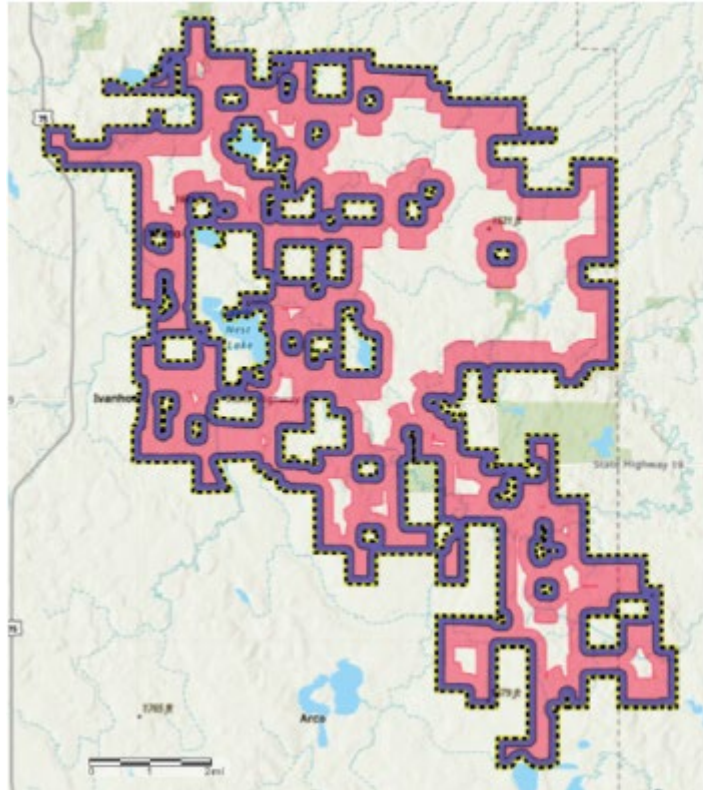
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# Key Reasons for Reform (cont.)

- Moving to a 1.1x height setback creates an opportunity to utilize greater flexibility in turbine placement, reducing the real impacts of turbine placement (shadow flicker, noise, agricultural impacts etc.)
  - With more land available within a project footprint to place turbines, developers have greater opportunity to site turbines in locations with fewer impacts.
- Does not affect ability to modify the setback on a project-specific basis through the existing public input process; landowners with specific concerns can share them as the PUC considers per-project variances.

# Usable Acreage



- **1.1 Blade Tip Height Multiplier** setback from nonparticipant property lines (23,182 acres available)
- **3x5 Wind Access Buffer** setback from nonparticipant property lines (7,996 acres available)

**Nearly 3x more buildable land** under 1.1 Blade Tip Height Multiplier

*Setbacks shown are from **only** non-participant property lines, and do not include additional setbacks from wetlands, roads, transmission, or buildings.*



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# Usable Acreage



**1.1 Blade Tip Height Multiplier**  
(2,293.2 acres available)



**3x5 Wind Access Buffer**  
(85.6 acres available )

**Over 25x more  
buildable land** under  
1.1 Blade Tip Height  
Multiplier

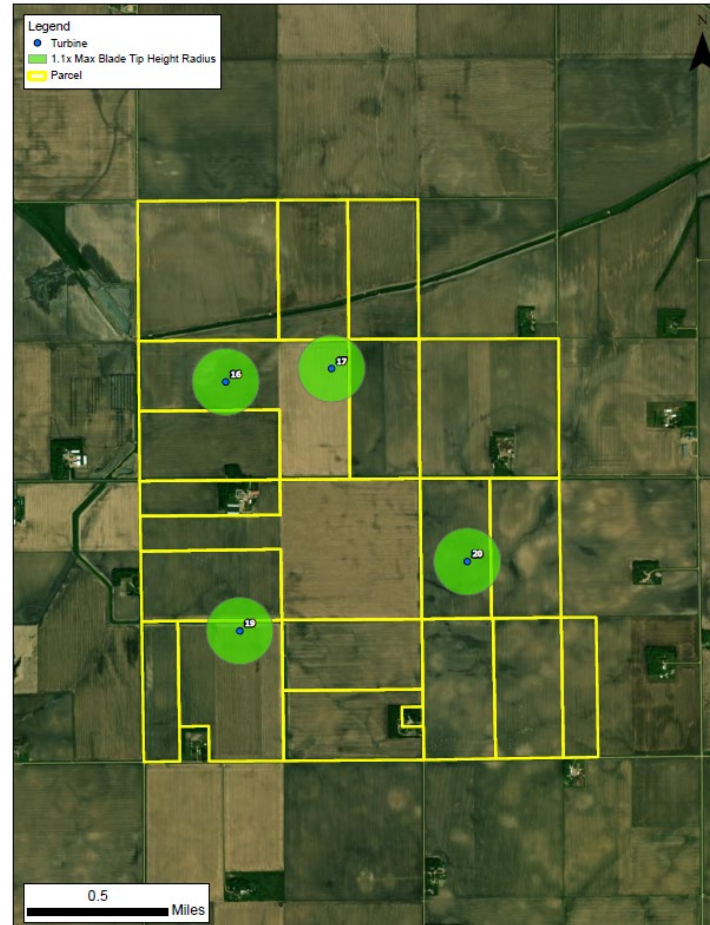
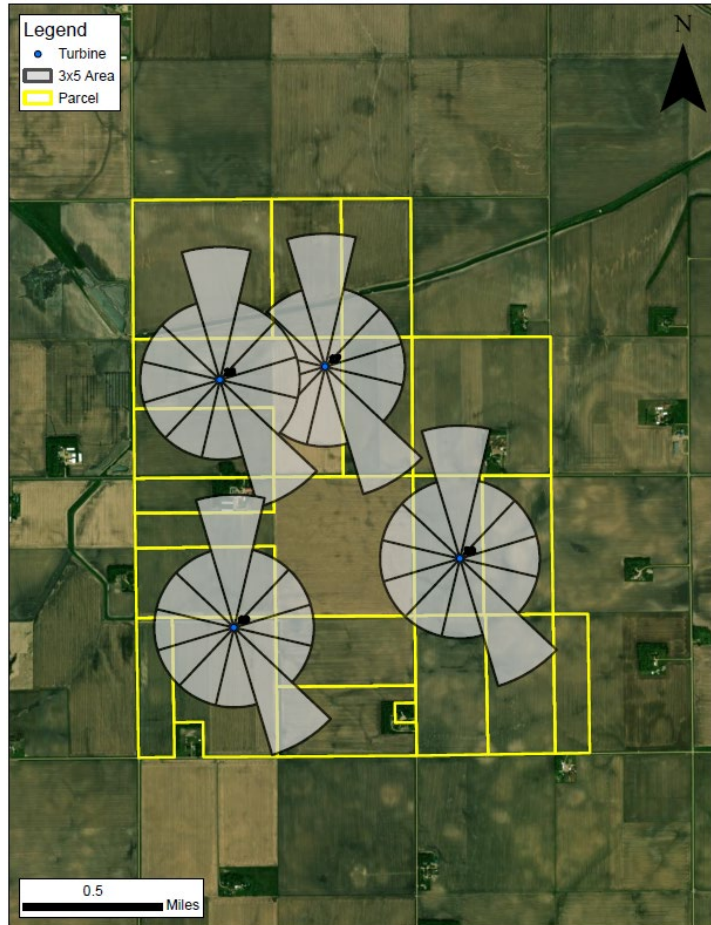
*Setbacks shown  
include those from  
non-participant  
property lines,  
wetlands, roads,  
transmission, and  
buildings.*



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# Land Requirements



**Land requirements halved**  
under 1.1 Blade Tip Height  
Multiplier

*In one instance, a 50 turbine, 300 MW project in MN would require nearly double the acreage of signed land than a 50 turbine, 300 MW project in a state with a 1.1 Blade Tip Height Multiplier (43,500 acres in MN vs 23,900 acres elsewhere).*



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