**Q&A: Expert Panel on the Potential Health Impacts Associated with Exposure to Wind Turbines**

1. What prompted the need for the expert science panel and the need for a report on wind turbines and human health effects?

There are a variety of existing and proposed wind turbine projects in Massachusetts. Some members of the public have raised concerns that there may be health impacts potentially related to noise, infrasound, vibrations and/or light flickering generated by the turbines.

In January 2011, Commissioner Kenneth Kimmell of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), in collaboration with Commissioner John Auerbach of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), decided to proactively address the questions that were being raised by convening an expert science panel who would evaluate the scientific literature to address these concerns. The panel's finding, as documented in a report, was envisioned to help local officials by providing guidance and clarity on the science.

2. What is the panel's charge?

The panel's charge is to review the scientific literature and to identify and evaluate documented or potential human health impacts or risks that may be associated with exposure to wind turbines, and issue a report that will facilitate discussion of wind turbines and public health based on sound science. The panel will also identify documented best practices that could reduce the potential for human health impacts.

3. Is the science panel initiating new research studies on the health effects of wind turbines?

No. The panel's charge does not involve initiating new research studies, such as epidemiologic studies or investigations of the health status of populations living near wind turbines located in Massachusetts. The panel's work is aimed at establishing the current state of science and health impacts associated with wind turbines from studies of the literature.

4. Will the science panel investigate operating wind turbines in Massachusetts and make recommendations to resolve resident complaints?

No, the panel is not investigating or addressing reported problems at any particular turbine installation. However, the panel is also reviewing and taking into account public comments and information sent to the Wind Turbine Docket in order to understand the range of issues that should be considered in their report.

5. How were panelists selected?

MassDEP collaborated with MDPH to develop a scope of work and then identified the types of scientific expertise that would be needed to assess wind turbine attributes and health concerns that have been expressed by some Massachusetts residents. Steps the agencies then took to create an independent panel included asking each potential member to tell us about their experience with wind turbines and what their views and/or positions on wind turbines and health effects were. The purpose of soliciting this information was to help ensure that panel members did not come into the process with any bias. Based on the answers provided, no member of the Wind Turbine Science Panel reported being directly or indirectly employed by or receiving funding from the wind turbine industry. In addition, no member of the panel expressed a particular position about wind turbines and health effects.

6. What areas of expertise are provided by the panel members?

The panelists' expertise includes: (1) a clinician/pediatrician/public health representative with experience in addressing wind turbine health concerns; (2) a sleep disturbance specialist; (3) an acoustical noise/infrasound expert; (4) an industrial and mechanical engineer whose specialty is research on wind turbines; (5) an epidemiologist; (6) a specialist in behavioral neuroscience and psychology; and (7) a local MA Board of Health representative.

7. Was there an opportunity for public participation?

Yes. As advertised, the Wind Turbine Docket was an opportunity for the public to submit comments, concerns and reference materials for the panel to review. The comment period ran from June 7 to July 22, 2011. All materials submitted have been made available to panel members for their consideration.

8. Will the public comments received be made available to the public?

Yes. MassDEP intends to make the public comments and documents received available to the public for their review on our web site consistent with laws intended to protect medical and other personal information and copyright material. Commenters who provided personal medical information will be asked for permission to post their comments. For other comments, personal information such as email addresses or postal addresses will be redacted before being posted. Upon written request, Mass DEP will provide for inspection in its office or copies by mail un-redacted copies of these records.

9. Will there be any future opportunities for public participation?

Yes. There will be a public comment period on the final report from the science panel and comments received will be considered prior to its use by or adoption by any state agencies. In addition, if and when policies or regulations are proposed by the state for wind turbines, there will be a robust public process. The panel's report is expected to be available in January, 2012. We initially anticipated the report would be available in the Fall, but panel members need additional time to complete their work. The agencies will make this report available on their websites.

10. Are the panel's meetings open to the public?

No. The Attorney General's Office has determined that the panel is not subject to the Open Meeting Law and may conduct its business without convening public meetings. The agencies met with the panelists at their first meeting to make sure that they understood the scope of work for the panel. Neither MassDEP nor MDPH are participating in the panel's deliberations of the science, because the agencies want the panel to generate an independent scientific report. This wind turbine science panel is conducting its work to foster the timely and independent preparation of its report.

11. Is the science panel working under any specific statutory authority or has it been delegated any specific authorities?

No. The purpose of the panel is to prepare a report based on the scientific and medical literature and comments received. It is envisioned that the panel's report will facilitate a discussion of wind turbines and will provide help to local officials by providing clarity on the science of wind turbines and potential health effects.

12. Will the science panel recommend specific siting standards such as the distance wind turbines should be set back from residences?

No. As the panel's charge makes clear, the panel's report will not contain recommended siting standards or setback distances. The science panel will, however, provide information on the factors that affect the potential human health impact of turbines and best practices that could reduce those impacts. Examples of best practices could include design, operation, maintenance, and management of turbines.

13. Will the panel's best practices recommendations become mandatory guidance or standards?

No. The best practices could be used to inform public policy decisions by state, local or regional governments concerning the siting of turbines. Any potential standards or guidelines developed would involve a subsequent public process.

14. When will the panel's report be available?

The schedule is based on when the independent panel members are able to complete their work. We had anticipated that the report would be completed in the Fall. At this time, we expect to receive the report in January 2012. The agencies support the panel's decision to take additional time, given the substantive tasks we've asked them to undertake and the importance of their work.