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## **Scientific Committee for Food and Environment - ASSIGNMENT TO VKM ON ONSHORE WIND POWER AND IMPACT ON DRINKING WATER SOURCES**

### **Background**

When managing drinking water resources, it is important to plan on a long-term basis to protect the sources of drinking water from all types of pollution. Not all pollutants can be removed through water treatment, and the long-term consequences of increased and possible accumulative pollution of drinking water may be difficult to foresee and might pose a risk.

There are already several wind power plants established on land in Norway, and we are beginning to see the specific, professional challenges our inspectors must handle. Establishing wind power plants involves investing significant economic values, the cost of substantial natural resources, and maneuvering in a challenging political landscape. Many new applications for wind power plant developments will come in the coming years across the country. Therefore, it is important that the Norwegian Food Safety Authority (NFSA) has a solid knowledge base to fulfil our administrative responsibilities. NFSA must set clear expectations and specific requirements as early as possible in the process to highlight drinking water considerations.

Management of drinking water and drinking water resources is regulated by the Drinking Water Regulations. According to §4, it is "prohibited to pollute drinking water. The prohibition includes all activities, from the water catchment area to the tap points, that pose a risk of contaminating the drinking water. Activities also include outdoor recreation and other exercise of the right of public access. Where protective measures have been established under § 12 or restrictions under § 26, the prohibition includes violations of these. In water catchment areas, agricultural activities can take place if they do not pollute the drinking water or violate protective measures under § 12 or restrictions under § 26."

A water catchment area is defined in the Drinking Water Regulations as; an area, above and below ground, from which the water in the raw water source comes.

NFSA supervises the Drinking Water Regulations. We supervise § 12 and the protective measures established by the waterworks owner. For § 26 (Municipal duties) and § 27 (County municipal duties), the protection of raw water sources and water catchment areas in local and regional land-use plans applies. § 26 is directed at municipalities as planning authorities and at the responsibility the municipality has to ensure safe drinking water for the population. The municipality must assess the need for restrictions and protect drinking water sources with

catchment areas through zoning and necessary regulations. The municipality must fulfil its obligations under the Public Health Act and, in accordance with the Civil Protection Act and considerations of societal security given in the Planning and Building Act, ensure that the supply of drinking water is assessed and followed up. Supervision of the municipality's duties under § 26 follows the provisions of the Public Health Act (County Governor and Health Inspectorate) and the Civil Protection Act (Ministry). Although we do not administer §§ 26 and 27, we have clear obligations under the Planning and Building Act with the right to object if the municipality does not adequately consider drinking water when preparing the land-use part of the municipal plan and zoning plans, as well as when granting permits under relevant regulations.

NFSA has traditionally handled the protection of water catchment areas and water sources very strictly. In principle, all human activities that can lead to pollution in the catchment area are undesirable. For example, this may apply to the construction of hiking trails, building measures, and various forms of business activities that are not in accordance with the regulations established to protect the water catchment area.

### **Plan Program – Planning and Building Act (Municipality)**

Area regulation is the municipality's process for the area proposed for wind power utilization. The plan program should describe the goal of the plan, current guidelines, topics to be assessed in the plan, and what should be subject to an impact assessment. The plan program for area regulation is adopted by the municipal council in the respective municipalities. NFSA must set clear expectations already in this process.

The Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate (NVE) is responsible for the concession legislation for wind power plants, while the administrative responsibility for drinking water lies with (NFSA). When planning and establishing wind power plants on land where water catchment areas are affected, the same strict requirements for protecting the drinking water source should, in principle, apply.

Notification with a proposal for an impact assessment program according to the Energy Act (NVE) is an early warning that contains a description of the project, a summary of expected impacts, and a proposal for what should be assessed before a concession can be applied for (the assessment program). The notification should also be sent to NFSA, and already at this early stage in the concession process, NFSA must set clear expectations for what the assessment should include.

The concession application with associated impact assessment should also be sent for consultation to NFSA. When the concession is granted, the developer must prepare an environmental, transport, and construction plan (MTA). This plan should assess and document the risk of contaminating drinking water during the establishment and operation of the wind power plant and any mitigating measures to ensure that the drinking water source is not contaminated. Here too, NFSA must provide clear feedback.

NFSA should generally be a consultation body in all notifications, concession applications, and detailed plans, and can, if necessary, raise objections to the project. However, NFSA experiences that impact assessments and MTA regarding drinking water resources are often inadequate and insufficiently emphasize drinking water considerations. It is also challenging for our inspectors to assess the developer's assessments of hazards and risks and mitigating measures, as the inspectors lack both practical experience and a solid knowledge base.

### **Assignment/Mandate**

NFSA requests VKM's assistance in developing requirements for what impact assessments and MTA should include in terms of information and assessments regarding drinking water resources.

Therefore, NFSA requests VKM to map/identify and create an overview of what information should be included in the impact assessment. The overview should cover requirements for information on chemical substances relevant to the wind power plant's life cycle.

Deadline: December 1, 2025

Sincerely,

Yours Sincerely

Ole Fjetland  
fagdirektør

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seksjonssjef

*Dokumentet er godkjent elektronisk / This document has been electronically approved*