

Hello, my name is Erica Berl and I live on Georgia Mountain Rd in Georgia. First of all, for the record, I would like to say that I am neither a climate change denier nor completely against wind energy. But, I believe that it is critical that wind turbines are sited in the most appropriate places, and that the ridgelines of Vermont are far from being appropriate.

I am someone who recently moved to Vermont, so I have a little bit of the outsider's perspective. Before moving to Vermont, I lived in the Boston area and I visited the state frequently. What I loved about Vermont was its natural beauty. Especially the mountains. When my husband and I decided to move here, part of the motivation was to live in the country -a place where we could have a bit of land, a beautiful view and peace and quiet. We thought we had found the perfect place on Georgia Mountain. It was a very peaceful and quiet site. We thought we did our due diligence by researching the zoning regulations before we bought our property. We were reassured by what we learned. Georgia Mountain is zoned recreational which means that that any future subdivisions have to be bigger than 20 acres and nothing over 35 feet can be built. Sounds very appealing, doesn't it? We thought so. We were prepared for the potential that a dairy farm at the top of the hill might be sold and broken up into several properties. What we never conceived of is that a project that required blasting off the top of the mountain and erecting towers 400 ft high would be allowed to be built in an area that the town had already designated as worth preserving. We feel very betrayed by both the town of Georgia and the State of Vermont. This is not what we signed up for.

The project on Georgia Mountain has only been in operation for about a month so we are still in the process of assessing whether the noise is going to be disruptive, but I'm not optimistic and I'll tell you why. While it's true that sometimes the turbines are very quiet, there are other times when they are quite audible. Now it's winter and we have good windows so we don't usually hear the turbines in our house. But, I can often hear them quite clearly when I'm outside – even when I have ear muffs on and a hooded jacket - and the sound can vary from a steady to a pulsating hum. What concerns me is that during the warmer months, we like to keep the windows open all night – we don't have central air, like many Vermonters and it's the only way to cool down the house. Our bedroom is in the front of our house which faces the turbines. I am very worried that the noise will disrupt our sleep, which would really affect the quality of our lives.

I want to get back to the point I made earlier...it is naturally very quiet on the mountain. What's been really surprising is that my neighbors have actually measured the loudness of the sound produced by the turbines. They've taken the measurements at a few of the houses on the road. At their loudest, the turbines have not exceeded the 45 dB limit set by the Public Service Board. Yet, at times, they seem to be quite loud to us. I think what the standard set by the PSB doesn't take into consideration is how quiet it is naturally on the mountain. And I think this is a flaw in their standard. The sound of the turbines can really stand out – and it's not a natural sound. To be honest, at times it sounds as if we are living next to a factory that hums 24 hours a day. This is not a noise I expected to have to hear on a rural mountain.

I am also concerned that this project is going to affect our property value – in fact I'm pretty sure it will and we are almost definitely going to grieve our taxes. First of all, we already know that this project adversely affected the value of the dairy farm at the top of our hill. The farm had been for sale for a few years – the farmers were hoping to retire – but they had to drop their price significantly to sell. As soon as prospective buyers found out about the project, they passed on the property – and it is a beautiful property otherwise. I know that if we were looking to buy again, we would pass up any property that was underneath an industrial wind development. There are a lot of other properties to choose from in the area – ones that still have unspoiled views and are not in the shadow of such an intrusive project.

I heard one of the legislators on the radio saying that they had seen many cell towers on ridgelines up and down VT so wind turbines would not further adversely affect our vistas. I'd like to invite you all to visit Georgia Mountain. We have both a cell tower and the turbines – there is no comparison. Compared to the turbines, the cell tower is miniscule. Not to mention that in 7 years of living on the mountain, I've never heard a peep out of the cell tower.

As I said at the beginning, I am not against wind energy – but siting is everything. To me it makes sense to have wind projects on the plains of Texas where there is steady wind and the natural beauty of the area is not the state's most valuable resource. I think Vermont is making a huge mistake and undervaluing its relatively unspoiled landscape. The gains we will make in clean energy production are minimal, but what we could lose by ruining our best resource – our natural beauty - is potentially devastating. I urge you to support the moratorium.