

Save Western Ohio has been involved in lobbying – against wind energy in Ohio. Why?

In reality, wind power is a fundamentally bad idea. It is not new technology. It goes back to the Bronze Age and has been at the public trough for over 30 years. And with its government lobby hard work, it is lavished with 25 times the subsidy per unit of generation than any other electricity source except solar, but still hasn't managed to make inroads of more than a fraction of a single percent of our energy needs.

Today, to preserve their entitlements, many players in the wind power industry are misleading the public about what the technology can and can't do – propagating a misinformation campaign funded by our own tax dollars. That just isn't right.

Even in countries like Germany where wind power is fully deployed across the nation, it's contribution to base load power – the part coal serves – is well under 10% of the power that wind supplies, which is about 25% of its rated capacity. That math leads you to wind power's contribution to base load power at two and a half percent of rated capacity. So it takes forty gigawatts of installed windpower – 17,000 turbines to replace one, one gigawatt thermal plant - the visual, environmental and land use impact of which is several hundred times that of a modern nuclear facility, for instance. That's not green in my book. Not even close.

Save Western Ohio supporters want the voting public to understand and face the true costs and benefits of wind energy, especially in the context of its impending and costly widespread deployment in Ohio. We hope to help the general public understand the exceptionally poor value wind power offers. With Ohio's economic troubles, we can't afford to fiddle around with low or no value wind projects while Rome burns. We need to attract industry – real industry to Ohio. Industry that supplies what

people really want to buy. To attract this, we need, among other things, a strong supply of inexpensive, reliable power.

By contrast, wind technology is a highly variable, non-dispatchable source of electricity that relies on subsidy and a public image built on half truths for its very existence. In most places throughout the United States, especially Ohio, massive wind facilities will sporadically produce little or nothing at times of peak demand. As a result these facilities, each costing taxpayers millions of dollars, would generate almost no capacity value --that is, reliable levels of power at key demand times that can be relied on in any 15 minute ahead interval. This is historically an essential condition for power generating plants in all segments of demand.

How did you become involved in this campaign? Do you have a background in the energy business or wind power?

I have a lot of experience in the efficiency of large industrial machinery, but I knew very little about industrial scale wind energy until a year and a half ago. But what I am saying today is collaborated by many in the electricity business. If my credentials are a concern to you, I can supply you a long list of industry experts who you may contact to ask for an interview. But there is this rule out there – written or unwritten – in the energy field, that experts may not disparage new sources of energy, so most may not be willing to go on record in agreement with what I am saying.

There is a derogatory term – NIMBY – that your situation brings to mind. How do you defend against this?

Well, yes, I am definitely a NIMBY – as all of us are. Our country was founded and defended based on NIMBYism. Look at the Boston tea party, for instance – and the desire of early settlers to be something other than an extension of England. All home owners become NIMBYs when faced with their rights being compromised.

Another way to look at the NIMBY is that it is a cautionary acronym for “Next It Might Be You!”

Almost twenty years ago I invested in a beautiful wooded property surrounded by hundreds of acres of forested hunting and fishing land and church camps. It is a wonderful place to live.

The natural beauty of Logan County’s glacial ridge is a highly valued resource for Ohioans who live and vacation here. We are right in the middle of the otherwise flat northwest quadrant of the state, which is one reason rural housing levels have reached 25 to 40 homes per square mile where they want to put the windmills.

The negative tone of NIMBY exists because it implies selfish personal interest and interference at the expense of the public good. I just want my tax dollars funding truth and due diligence from our elected officials and full disclosure of data from the electricity industry - regardless of implications to my personal property. The government of by and for the people really needs the people to be properly educated in order to function as designed. And I don’t mean we need to be further educated by the wind industry! Their self promotion is a matter of survival. Can you really blame them for wanting to survive or thrive? Of course not. But should you swallow their marketing tales whole. Definitely not!

[So what lit this fire in you to “swim against the current?”](#)

One answer would be property values and property rights, but it is more than that. That valuable natural views would be subverted by huge, differentially moving turbine blades; that many vulnerable species of wildlife would be put at risk, as well as much sensitive habitat; that the quality of life for people who must live near them would be reduced, sometimes to the detriment of their health; that nearby property values would plummet; that few jobs and

relatively little local revenues would be created--all to placate an industry that produces no meaningful product or service--is simply outrageous.

I have talked to and corresponded with people all around the eastern US who didn't understand the size and scope of these projects until it was too late. I want better than that for Ohio. I think Ohioans are smart and can make better decisions on the front end based on some of the mistakes made in surrounding states. But only if they take the time to consider this overgrown fad more carefully.

Developers work very quietly to create a regulatory and entitlement environment that allows them to exist. Initially I thought that if wind power is becoming part of a significant contribution to a big picture solution to wean the nation off of foreign oil or reduce toxic emissions from burning coal, and if our region offered a good wind resource, then perhaps this was a necessary step for the good of all Ohioans, Americans and humanity. Unfortunately, the hard numbers from early research did not bear any of this out. Contrary to T. Boone Pickens' "plan," natural gas will become an even bigger part of electricity supply as wind power grows. Some fast acting generation source has to cleanly and efficiently ramp up and down as the wind blows, then calms. That something fits the natural gas profile best.

The 2006 DOE EIA reports showed wind at a fraction of a percent of total energy now, and forecast to reach only 2% by 2030. And that is in raw, unsolicited kWhs, as opposed to what we need - dispatchable, reliable power on demand. Our national energy consumption grows by 2% almost every year, so it is hard to swallow the idea that wind power holds the promise of much more than offsetting a year's worth of consumption growth rate after 20 plus years of investing in it. And these numbers certainly don't reflect whether wind power displaces coal, nuclear, oil, natural gas

or others. That's an important thing – the first thing, really, but harder to convey in a short time.

Look, we all wish for simple, clean and green solutions. Unfortunately it isn't as simple as the wind industry people would like us to believe. In fact, they are capitalizing on a simplistic image that misleads the public. The ultimately futile effort to reconcile the square peg of wind's relentless unreliability with the wide and deepening round hole of modern expectations for reliable, minimally regressive performance, has enormous implications for increasing the cost of electricity for consumers. And the thermal cost of wind integration throughout most grid systems has grave implications for carbon emissions offsets, which is wind's *raison d'être*, since the accompanying generation necessary to smooth out wind variations will in most cases be fossil-fueled and working in a highly inefficient manner.

I encourage listeners to find and read the paper titled “Why wind won't work” by Jon Boone. This is the easiest to read, while still thorough enough, explanation I have found. It tells the complicated truth in a way most people can grasp. That paper is available on Save Western Ohio's web site, as well as on various others such as windaction.org, stopillwind.org and others. Save Western Ohio's URL is www.savewesternOH.org. The wind industry bought up similar domain names like savewesternohio.org and savewesternohio.com, and those URLs now point to pro-wind sites, so watch out – be sure to use the “O H” without the “I O” in the address, and the DOT ORG – not DOT COM extension.

Wind consumes no fuel and emits no toxins. Sure, it is highly visible, but so are coal stacks and their poisonous gas plumes. It seems like a no brainer to embrace wind power regardless of how much it can contribute to the overall picture.

That's just it. While it is true that wind power uses little external fuel aside from the wind, and true, it does not emit toxins directly, the implication then is that it actually offsets coal or other fuels for electric generation sources that do emit the bad stuff. But that's not true. Basically our system of electricity supply is based on the reality that storage of electricity, aside from hydro (another environmental bad boy) is not feasible in the big picture. Storage is both an environmental and financial nightmare that makes both bean counters and environmentalists shudder. You can store electricity in batteries, which are getting better, but not enough better in the foreseeable future considering how much energy we are talking about. The best ways to store energy are heat energy and hydro – by using excess electricity to pump water up to higher lakes where it can be used to re-make electricity later when there is a shortage from other sources. But our electricity mostly comes from heated water – whether it is heated from burning coal or splitting atoms or other heat sources such as geothermal or lumpy oil, we generally boil water under high pressure to power turbines that make electricity. And solar power can supplement and directly reduce the burning of coal on a daily cycle that is predictable and manageable. This is land consuming stuff that works best in areas with less annual cloud cover, but at least it works at ground level, not 400 or 500 ft. in the air.

Wind power by contrast, uses the wind to create electricity directly, where it must be consumed immediately. The catch is, wind power is very fickle and unreliable. The wind industry will try to dress this down, but the numbers don't lie – you just can't count on wind when you need it, and that is a much bigger problem than it might seem to the average voter.

The short version is that coal primarily makes highly reliable “base load” power – that is, the minimum power level society consumes 24/7. Wind can't really supply to that part of our need because wind speeds, especially here in Ohio, change quickly, often

without warning. So when it is windy, there is bright shiny green power available that may or may not be needed at that time. Meanwhile coal and nuclear are supplying the base load, and these systems ramp up and down slowly, but very reliably – a mismatch with wind energy. So with a system of windmills hither and yon, you can only really offer power to peak load, leaving other peaking stations to work harder ramping up and down more than they already do, putting on them additional wear and tear and using their fuel less efficiently. This is all validated by the energy industry - the grid operators and other generators and the power sellers. Bottom line is the government is supplying so much aid to deploy wind power, it's easy money that even those who know better can't resist a piece of the action. Big players – financial leaders like Pickens – are now spending millions to hedge against the possibility our federal government will wise up and reverse or revise the renewable energy subsidy system to rewards reliable – not fickle – sources of power that actually offset emissions generating plants at an effective ratio.

Can you summarize the big picture building blocks of your case “No Wind Turbines?”

There are five main reasons our early yard signs bear the slogan NO Wind Turbines:

First, we felt deceived by what we perceived as a subversive process that appeared to be much less than proud of their plans for our region and their business model. Push back – short and sweet – seemed appropriate.

Secondly, our research findings have and continue to be in blatant disagreement with the propaganda oozing from the wind energy industry. As T. Boone Pickens openly admits, we too, found that without unprecedented subsidy levels, the whole idea falls flat on its face. It smelled like a rat. It smelled like Enron. Who wants to

dispense with so much of the beauty of the state and a lot of private citizens rights to peaceful enjoyment of their property before we fully evaluate the pros and cons? So we certainly mean to say “NO WIND TURBINES – at least until the industry’s product proves itself worthy of the myriad sacrifices.

Third, the siting guidelines sought by these industrial developers – distances from property lines of non-participating residents – were unsafe, by windmill manufacturers’ own admissions. That rattled us even more, making us more determined to say no, at least until we could educate the public and hopefully influence energy policy.

We came to the conclusion that the established homestead density here, primarily higher value residences on 5 to 20 acres, was driven by the beautiful rolling hills and quiet, open skies. My area has about 40 houses per square mile – about 800 feet apart on average – too close and too many to happily co-exist with windmills. When they show turbine facilities in Kansas or the Texas panhandle, do you notice anything missing in the pictures? Houses, exactly!

Finally, when we realized the touted and readily perceived benefits of the technology as it is today aren’t really there. It’s about 5 times the cost of coal energy to begin with when you consider the cost of subsidies and incremental backup generation, and then you have to multiply that by at least 20 to get the actual displacement of base load coal burning wind power actually offsets. Now we are at 100 times the cost of the coal power we don’t have to make because we built the windmills.

On top of that, our calculations point to the visual presence of windmills – or groups of them – as 30 to 700 times more visually present than coal and nuclear facilities per kWh.

If you offset coal and nuclear at a reasonable price (one that doesn't obliterate our piggy banks), maybe that visual thing is tolerable.

Then factor in the quality of the wind resource here. It's not very good by national standards, but the industry has encouraged NREL and their "independent subcontractor" AWS Truewind to liberalize the wind shear models making Ohio's wind resources look much more hopeful than they are. A lot of factors go into how much energy windmills create. Bowling Green, whose ground level winds are much better than in Logan County, has four of these windmills. They operate at 22% of their rated capacity in a good year. None of us would buy an appliance or vehicle that worked 22% of the time, would we? And on a weather based schedule? Come on! Maybe at 450 ft off the ground, the winds here are as good as or a little better than Wood County, but we also have beautiful hills, a lot of forests, hunting clubs, fishing clubs, golf courses, and a whole lot more houses sprinkled about than Wood County does. It's pancake flat up there. People still value the aesthetics from their properties – wide open sunsets and such – that no one "owns" the rights to.

All of this points to greed and deception – things we naturally want to say no to. So NO is what we said. Besides, I had visited NY and PA and IL and knew what the "wind warriors" there had tried that failed. Diplomacy might be the best policy, but it hasn't worked in this venue yet, so we tried to make a more obstinate premier.

[With so much money and power behind the green push, how do you choose your battles?](#)

We hope to earn respect and solicit the help of those who take the time to understand and accept the truth in this matter, then go from there with whatever resources become available to us. So far, the

battle ground we have used has been “improper siting.” In other words, if there are a lot of existing homes around, then can you safely erect and maintain hundreds of windmills among them? At some home density the answer is no. What the prohibitive density level is is the question. The term used is “setbacks.” That’s the shortest distance a windmill can be erected from a non participating property owner’s property line. We defend that the setback must be measured from property lines – not houses. Otherwise the industry is using my land – that land I own between my house and their turbine as part of their project buffer zone, and I am not being compensated for it. Any project nuisance or safety hazard that exists at my house, other than sleep disturbance, would create an equal or greater nuisance at my property line.

[So what is a fair setback distance and how should regulators decide what that distance should be?](#)

First of all, we all need to put this in perspective. As Jon Boone points out, wind energy is shooting blanks at global warming, toxic emissions and reduction in our thirst for Texas tea. But to answer your question, we have been touting windmill makers’ maintenance manual safety guidelines as a starting point. These manuals are authored for employees of wind farms and under the influence of the manufacturer’s insurance provider who is not interested in paying claims backed by OSHA findings that are inconsistent with manufacturer’s guidelines. If a professional isn’t safe hanging around inside some safety radius, why is it right to expose the neighbors to that risk 24/7?

[And what do windmill manufacturers safety standards say?](#)

They vary, but they must be interpreted as a multiple of the device height. Nordex, the manufacturer who will likely supply Everpower – a developer first in line to built here – says 1,640 ft. World leader, Vestas from Europe advises employees of wind

farms “not to linger” within 1,300 ft. of a turbine “unless it is necessary. We feel a neighbor ought to be safe lingering at the edge of their own property. These generally translate to 3 or 4 times the total height of the windmill.

I worked with Senator Bill Seitz to get state minimum setbacks established. We got it done, but the setbacks were negotiated down – by Strickland’s office and wind energy lobbyists - to less than half the distances we just discussed. Senator Seitz felt “something was better than nothing” so that’s what we have, for better or worse.

In my opinion, instead of a standard that exemplifies prudence and safety, we have delivered an invitation to developers to site the things unsafely. Good for Ohio jobs? Maybe. Good for air quality? That’s a stretch. Good for preserving the rights of the Ohio homeowners? I don’t think so.

I liked working with the Senator. He really knows how to get things done. I just wish he had more power. I’d like to see him run for Governor. There is an onus on our elected officials to act in the best interest of the public, and in this case, that onus should not be downgraded just because the public is misled en masse. We try to impress that ideology on the legislators, but they have to live to fight another day, you know? So we are grateful for any media that will help us encourage people to think this through. I thank WOSU for this opportunity to share “the rest of the story.”

[So have you had success with this strategy?](#)

Sadly, no. The promises made by the wind industry have the development department and the governor’s office swooning, so setback recommendations from the Senator were met with a firm no from the executive branch.

Even more sadly, though, is that wind doesn't deliver as promised, and the dollars funneled toward it could be used to insulate homes better, deploy generation plants like solar whose output corresponds to peak demand, to promote cleaner coal burning, to fund American oil extraction and refineries that will buy us twenty or thirty years until the power grid, nuclear plants and developing technologies can replace oil altogether. The good news is that all these now under-funded areas hold promise for job creation, too, while holding the promise of making a bigger difference in preserving the American way of life over the next twenty years. We're in for some real tough times for the next five to ten, though, and we need to be certain we develop our energy sources intelligently. Making wind profitable with our tax dollars in low wind states like Ohio isn't very intelligent.

[Is there anything else you'd like to tell us before we take calls?](#)

There is so much more! These things throw blade fragments, can throw heavy sheets of ice, catch on fire, topple over, emit noise (both audible and subsonic) and cast incessant moving shadows. They kill birds and bats by the thousands, call for clear cutting of forested areas both for construction and to sweeten the wind, and generally scar any semblance of natural skyscape and ambiance for their rural neighbors for several miles in any direction. Enronesque property value studies there may be, but I challenge people to visit the larger wind projects in the east and come away saying you'd want to live in there. In exchange for this we get energy when it is windy enough, but not too windy, and with no regard for whether bonus energy is needed then or not.

There are wind resource rights issues, project effects that we have not enumerated, avian impacts, a lot of areas, but I am trying to keep our position as simple and powerful as possible – the 80:20 rule, you know?

The only rational way to consider wind technology is as an effective delivery system for T. Boone Pickens income sheltering. Maybe Columbus Public Radio should investigate the trade-offs between the upfront investment "benefits" that will accrue to large corporations (such as Florida Power and Light and General Electric) in the form of significantly reduced tax obligations and the fact that taxpayers/ratepayers will underwrite the capital and operating costs of energy projects from limited liability wind companies that produce no capacity value, doing nothing either for our aging electricity infrastructure or for provisioning future demand.

“The Emperor that is our electricity supply isn’t naked yet, ladies and gentlemen, but he is preparing to adorn some very wispy garments in his pursuit of wind energy.” We need – really NEED - the heavy cloth of substantial, reliable and inexpensive power to spur our economy and job growth. Our tax dollars can be much more effectively channeled.

That’s about it. I just hope the message comes across legibly, is perceived as painfully unbiased as it is, and that everyone takes off their “green colored glasses” long enough to consider whether the conjectured “end” is more than a panacea, and whether or not that imagined end justifies the financial, political and aggressive land use rights “means” to get there.