

North Texas Wind Resistance Alliance

Working to Preserve the Quality of Life and Cultural Heritage of the North Texas Hill Country

August 17, 2006

An Open Letter to Landowners

You are an important decision maker with regard to the proposed industrial wind projects in Cooke and Montague Counties. Please take a minute to let us review some of the issues with you.

While we all support the search for clean and renewable sources of energy, land-based wind turbines do not provide the answer we all hope for. Wind's variability, its intermittent, unpredictable nature, makes it inefficient and unreliable as a source of power. The simple truth is that No Wind = No Electricity. Wind turbines produce absolutely no electricity as much as 35% of the time, when the wind is blowing less than 8± mph. They do not produce at full rated capacity until the wind reaches 33± mph, far less than 10% of the time. They automatically shut down if the wind exceeds 55± mph or they will tear themselves apart. Our grid operator, ERCOT, reported to the Texas Legislature last year that during peak demand, in the late afternoon in July and August when electricity is needed most, all wind turbines in Texas averaged together have historically produced only 16.8% of their rated capacity.⁽¹⁾ ERCOT adds that this was the average; many were producing nothing. Electricity cannot be stored in the grid. Electricity demanded by a consumer must be instantly "dispatchable" from a conventional generating plant. The electrical grid operator must constantly balance a reliable electrical supply with demand, and have dispatchable back-up generating capacity, in reserve, to manage the ups and downs of consumption, and provide for potential loss of supply.

ERCOT and the state's electricity producers work to maintain a generating reserve capacity in the Texas grid of at least 12.5% of summer peak demand. The amount of wind generated electricity accepted into the grid can never exceed the reserve capacity, or brownouts and blackouts would result when the wind slowed or stopped. If politicians and their powerful supporters mandate that grid participants purchase wind power in excess of existing reserve capacity, additional conventional power plants must be built to provide additional reserve. Wind's variable and unpredictable nature relegates it to a minor role in power production. Unfortunately, it cannot replace the dispatchable capacity of a single fossil fuel or nuclear plant.

Why then are we seeing the massive effort to construct industrial-scale wind projects in Texas, and across the country? Sadly for us, wind projects provide politicians and some of our electricity retailers with a feel-good public-relations ploy, giving the false impression that something is being done about our difficult energy and environmental choices, while providing large corporate and financial interests with massive tax credits and accelerated depreciation deductions to reduce and even eliminate their tax liabilities. The first five years of cash-flow from these subsidies compensates the wind developers for almost two-thirds of the cost of building these unneeded and irresponsible projects. To guarantee developers a market for the variable electrical output, the late Ken Lay and his Enron Wind subsidiary were able to push through the 1999 Texas legislature a requirement that electricity distributors buy 2,000 Megawatts of this "renewable" energy annually, by 2009. With the subsequent explosion in new wind projects, the Texas legislature, encouraged by the wind energy lobbyists, has now upped the requirement to more than 5,000 Megawatts annually by 2015.

While wind farms provide no real economic or environmental benefits to the public, do they provide a "windfall" to the landowner who has them placed on his property? No again. In spite of million dollar promises from leasing agents and public relations firms, the wind industry's own promotional organization, the American Wind Energy Association⁽²⁾, has stated in their "Myths vs. Facts" paper that "a reasonable estimate for income to a landowner from a single utility-scale turbine is \$2,000 per year"; and if the owner of a 250 acre farm were to cover it with seven turbines, the annual "income would be \$14,000". In another paper ("State Level RPS"), they again state that "each turbine ... provides \$2,000 to \$3,000 in lease payments per year". Individual landowners with turbines in the Abilene and Sweetwater areas tell us it is much less than this.

Is this modest income worth the permanent destruction in property value to the leasing landowner? Wind turbines are now mammoth industrial machines, taller than the Statue of Liberty, and taller than a 35-story office building. Could you sell your property at all? What about surrounding landowners? Most industrial wind projects have been placed in West Texas, in Upton and Pecos Counties, where land is held in huge tracts, rarely sells, has little-to-no scenic value, and is priced around \$250 per acre; and in Nolan and Taylor Counties where land is a little more scenic, has hunting value, and is priced around \$850 per acre. In a scenic portion of Taylor County, outraged ranchers and landowners are

P.O. Box 184, Saint Jo, TX 76265

www.northtexaswindresistance.com

suings the wind project developer (FPL) and the lessors. An established Abilene realtor stated that he had an attractive 300 acre listing next to the wind project, for which he could get no offers - an area where normally "any land with a deer on it" had been selling.

Having overloaded the high-voltage transmission capacity from West Texas, the developers are now moving into less compatible areas closer to D/FW, where there is only marginal wind, a higher population density to antagonize, and higher property values to destroy. Not only will their projects degrade existing property values, now in excess of \$2,500 per acre, they will stop the increases in value that are occurring as retiring and relocating Metroplex residents bid up the price of land due solely to its scenic value and rural character. This represents a loss not only to landowners, but to our cities, school districts, and hospital districts, as relocation slows and fewer new homes are built. Relocating residents now patronize our local hospitals, doctors, dentists, grocery stores, restaurants, home builders, lumber yards, air conditioning co.'s, electricians, plumbers, dozers, septic installers, roofers, metal building builders, fence builders, water-well drillers, farm and garden stores, feed stores, hardware stores, antique stores, banks, etc. A wind turbine buys nothing in our local economy.

What about health issues? Nina Pierpont, MD, PhD, a highly respected doctor (Johns Hopkins, Princeton, and Yale) in Malone, NY, testified before the New York State Assembly Energy Committee on March 7, 2006, that there is a recognized cluster of symptoms which occurs in a significant number of people in the vicinity of industrial wind turbines.⁽³⁾ Persons susceptible to these symptoms include those sensitive to low frequency vibration, those with preexisting migraine disorder (12% of all Americans), and those with inner-ear/ visual/ muscular interactions that make them prone to seasickness or vertigo. What are the symptoms? - Sleep problems, severe headaches, dizziness, nausea, unsteadiness, exhaustion, depression, problems with concentration and learning, and Tinnitus - a ringing in the ears.

Dr. Pierpont also reports that long term exposure to low frequency noise, below the range of hearing, causes fibrous thickening in the cardiovascular and pulmonary systems, and seizures and cognitive changes in the brain, a condition called Vibroacoustic Disease (VAD).⁽³⁾ Air pressure (sound) waves resonating inside the chest and skull, set up vibrations to which the body responds by reinforcing its softer tissues with extra collagen, causing thickening of the heart membrane and cardiac valves, fibrosis of the lungs, and the proliferation of glial cells in the brain. This condition was first studied in pilots, flight attendants, and aviation technicians. Medical researchers have found that the low-frequency noise intensities in the vicinity of wind turbines are in the range which can cause VAD, particularly with prolonged in-home and overnight exposures. Dr. Pierpont recommends a set-back of 1 ½ miles from any turbine.

What about audible noise, lights, shadow flicker, television interference, ice throw, bird and bat deaths, and fragmentation of wildlife habitat? The wind industry's own association admits that there are problems in each of these areas.⁽²⁾ Who will dismantle and remove the rusted towers when they are ultimately abandoned? More than 400 old towers, smaller and easier to remove than today's models, stand broken and abandoned in the wind farms at Altamont Pass, north of Livermore, California. But is it necessary to go on and on?

The reality of wind power does not live up to its image, or the spin of its promoters. It does tremendous damage to the environment, while cynically claiming to protect it. Its high cost and gross inefficiency provides little in the way of benefits. It represents a squandering of our scarce investment capital and utility-bill dollars on a feel-good, phony solution to our very real energy and environmental problems that remain unaddressed.

Please do your own research. We urge you not to sign a wind turbine lease that will negatively impact us all for generations to come. We know you love this area as much as we do.

Respectfully,

Your friends and neighbors with the North Texas Wind Resistance Alliance

P.S. Please watch the enclosed DVD, "Life Under a Windplant", and listen to actual experiences in Meyersdale, PA.

- (1) "Transmission Issues Associated with Renewable Energy in Texas, Informal White Paper for the Texas Legislature, 2005", available for download at <http://www.ercot.com/news/presentations/2006/RenewablesTransmissi.pdf>
- (2) See www.awea.org ; Myths vs. Facts Sheet , July 23, 2006; also http://www.awea.org/pubs/factsheets/0509-RPS_Progresses_in_States.pdf
- (3) See www.ninapierpont.com ; <http://www.ninapierpont.com/?s=wind>