

Dear Editor:

I am a life-long resident of Pottawatomie County, but my mother's family were all Wabaunsee Countians. You'll know the names: Soelter, Breymeyer et al. My great-great grandfather is buried in the Alma cemetery. My great-grandfather Soelter was a settler in Wabaunsee County in the 1870s. That matched my father's family, who settled in Pottawatomie County at the same time.

My family has been involved in manufacturing and industry for decades. From my point of view, the wind turbine proponents who claimed that this would bring economic benefit to the area are missing a key point. Long lasting economic benefits usually flow from jobs. Such projects as the Flint Hills Foods expansion in Alma, and even the expansion of industry in Wamego, do more for the economic well being of residents of Wabaunsee County than a few large-investment but manpower-free wind turbines. While there might be some job opportunities during construction, my guess is that these machines are built and erected by specialized crews.

With a population of less than 7,000 people, it doesn't take many new jobs to make a measurable impact. It is my belief that we have an opportunity to appropriately develop both our counties with agricultural and land-based tourism. For instance, the Oregon Trail park near Westmoreland draws about 10,000 people a year. Many stop to eat at the South Forty Cafe nearby. That not only keeps the restaurant busy in Westmoreland, but probably adds a job or two as well. My guess is that the park has an impact that sustains 4 or 5 jobs in north Pottawatomie County. Folks who fear this kind of tourism just need to be reminded that we aren't talking about Disneyland! I don't think we have to worry about hordes of vacationers descending upon our quiet towns and rural areas.

I applaud the courage of the Wabaunsee County commission, and especially Fred Howard and Maurice Gleason. Your neighbors to the north appreciate you!

Regards,

Clark Balderson

Wamego
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