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Western Front

Don't subsidize wind

Let's not subsidize the destruction of the Flint Hills.

Lee Allison of the Kansas Energy Council has suggested that Kansans pay developers to industrialize the Flint Hills with wind turbine complexes. That's like paying lottery winners to pick up their prize money.

Allison promotes additional state incentives to supplement numerous state and federal tax breaks already in place. The Elk River project proposed for Butler County has disclosed to the SEC that it anticipates producing 550,000 megawatt-hours of energy annually. The incentives in place would provide:

* A 1.8-cent-per-kwh federal tax credit that would result in \$9.9 million of tax credits per year. Over 10 years, taxpayers would subsidize that project with \$99 million of federal tax credits.

* A total exemption from state property tax.

* A five-year double declining accelerated depreciation tax deduction.

But Allison argues that the more than \$100 million of benefits and subsidies to the foreign developer would not be enough. He's lobbying for Kansas to contribute an additional \$27 million tax credit spread over 10 years.

There he goes again, paying lottery winners to pick up their prize money. Even if the developer makes a "gift" to Butler County of \$300,000 per year, would that benefit be worth the \$12.6 million per year that state and federal taxpayers provide? Over a 10-year period, taxpayers would give \$127 million to the owners of the Elk River project. And that could be just the beginning of this wealth transfer from Kansans to wind developers as there are over a dozen other projects currently being planned in Kansas. Do the math.

Some might argue that lower utility bills and reduced pollution are worth the expensive price. However, wind turbines would not help Kansas achieve either goal. Westar concluded that wind generated energy increases costs to consumers and that it's not in stockholders' best interests. And, the proposed projects will not allow existing traditional generating plants to shut down or even significantly reduce emissions. Our existing plants must keep running so that we have sufficient power whether the wind is blowing or not.

Ten projects in Kansas the size of Elk River would produce less than one quarter of one percent of the country's electricity needs. But those 10 projects would cost taxpayers \$1 billion over 10 years.

In addition to his state subsidies, Allison even plans to force the purchase of wind energy regardless of its inefficiency.

The boosters often tout Kansas as the Saudi Arabia of wind. Does anyone know of Saudi begging multi-national oil companies to come and haul their oil away?

*Terry Dykstra
Maple Hill*