

The Wonderful World of Windmills (or, The Emperor is Buck Naked)

Let me take you to the imaginary world where wind towers rule and the promises their developers make are actually believed. In this world you can see huge wind towers throughout the country without regard to historical, agricultural, or economic impact on the land. You can feast your gaze on them all day long in any direction and at night you can bask in the strobe light effect they give the surrounding countryside. The miles of additional highlines, electric grids, and maintenance roads, are considered lovely additions to the countryside. They are a place for the few remaining birds to perch and a means to survey the damage done to the Flinthills during the construction phase and ongoing operation of the development. The huge piles of rock that were excavated for the foundations of the 300 to 400 foot turbines make for unique silhouettes against the skyline, or have been crushed to cover the tallgrass prairies to make roads for the heavy industrial equipment needed to construct and maintain the towers. Many of the clear springs and creeks have been disrupted by the blasting and drilling needed to complete construction, but that is not important since there is less wildlife around in need of the water anyway. But it was all worth it. There now is a small amount of wind energy produced by all those wind towers! Of course, most of it is not used locally and your electric bills are now higher than before, but hey, that's progress!

If you remember the story of the "*Emperor's New Clothes*", everyone of good breeding and high intelligence was supposed to be able to see the wonderful clothes worn by the Emperor. So of course, everyone in the Kingdom claimed they could see the exceptional value of the clothes. It took only one small child in the fable to point out that the Emperor really had no clothes on at all! Perhaps a few small voices can also point out some of the obvious fallacies in all the wind energy hoopla.

First of all, many of you have heard a lot of these same promises before from the oil, gas, and railroad companies.

1. "You can farm/ranch right around it and never know it's there." Anyone who has had the pleasure of working around oil storage units knows it's no trouble at all to burn around them, keep the roads from washing, and of course, enjoy their aroma. Those around railroads know the railroad companies always kept up the fences, kept the brush down, and were most considerate on where to put crossings. Do you really think you won't notice the huge wind towers, their lights, the maintenance traffic, the fires they can cause from sparks and shorts, and the roads across your pastures?
2. "When we're done, we'll take everything down and put everything back just like it was." Right. Kind of like the railroad has done with it's land and tracks. IF the same wind development companies are even around when it's time to clean up, please tell me how you can cut, dig, blast, and excavate a 30 foot deep hole that is 20 to 30 foot across in these predominately rock hills, and then put it all back the way it was. Anyone who has tried to refold a map will have a pretty good idea it can't be done. Any geologist will tell you that it's impossible. The life projection for the wind towers is maybe 20 years before they are obsolete. That's a short life span for such a tremendous amount of destruction.
3. "It's your patriotic duty to support 'green' energy because this 'saves' fossil fuels." Your patriotic duty is to use common sense. Wind towers do not save fossil fuels because standard energy producing plants have to be kept running all the time anyway to back up the wind energy since it is not reliable. California, which, has 90% of the wind towers in the US, operated at a 23% efficiency rate. They also have rates that are 150% higher than the national average (1994), and almost double that of neighboring states. Add to that the energy needed to produce the steel for the towers, (approx. 35 tons each), produce the transmission lines, (at a cost of \$300,000.00 to \$1,000,000.00 per mile), produce the cement for foundations, and power all the heavy equipment necessary to construct and maintain the towers.
4. "Wind energy is the up and coming thing, don't get left out." Baloney. Since the early 1970's wind energy companies and the DOE (Dept. of Energy), have been throwing big bucks at wind power trying to get it off the ground because to be "green" is politically correct. In 1976 the DOE predicted that wind would supply 20% of all the U.S. electricity by 1995. Instead, by 1996, wind supplied just 1/10 of 1%, an over estimation of 20,000%. It wasn't for lack of funds shoveled into wind projects either. The DOE has spent \$900 Million (through 1995), to promote it, and has spent \$10 to \$129 Million

yearly since. In addition, Calif. Energy Com. Wind Program and Energy Technologies Advancement Program have added \$10 Million more in subsidies. The problem is that wind power simply is not an economically viable or reliable power source. California, Germany and Denmark, who had all planned to depend on wind energy have pulled back on plans for expansion and reduced their wind subsidies. A conservative estimate of the taxpayer subsidy is \$1,200.00 per installed Kilowatt for wind power, compared to \$580.00 per installed Kilowatt for gas-fired electricity. The real push here is that the Secretary of Energy was authorized to make "incentive payments" of 1.5 cents/kilowatt (plus inflation) from October 1993 through September 2003. Presumably those projects in the works could continue to receive payments. Does it strike you as odd that there is a sudden desire by the wind energy companies to suddenly get land leased, particularly in counties that have no zoning regulations? The only "green" in wind energy is the payments the wind developers get.

5. "Wind energy is becoming affordable and only costs slightly more than conventional energy sources." This takes creative bookkeeping, and is true only if you don't count the tax credits and tax subsidies that are actually the real money makers of the wind energy world. In addition, you need to add in the cost of the additional electric grids, construction material, and don't forget the conventional energy plants that must be kept running all the time to supply energy at a moments notice when the wind dies down. In EVERY area that makes use of wind energy, the rates have increased.
6. "Wind tower development will provide income for your community." Possibly a small amount short-term. The towers, lines, expertise, and equipment won't come from local sources. That leaves some meals and cement. Once a development is up and running, it needs only a few people stationed there. In the communities where wind power has been located, the net result is a loss in usable income due to increased rates. The wind companies are not taxed, so IF they chose to give anything to the community, it is only what THEY choose.
7. "Landowners leasing to the wind towers will be rich." Rich enough to pay a few bills and buy a new pick-up? Probably. Rich enough to rationalize to their families and neighbors what they have done? Possibly. Rich enough to justify the PERMENANT damage they allowed to occur in the Flinthills? Not likely.
8. "There is no research to prove the wind developments will disrupt wildlife." Wrong. There are currant studies done in areas with wind towers that show increased bird and bat mortality due to collisions with wind towers and the additional power lines. In a major migratory flightway such as we have in the Flinthills, the rate would undoubtedly increase. As for ground birds such as the Prairie Chicken; Robert Robel of Kansas State University has done a study commissioned by the Zilkha Renewable (wind) Energy project, and published it in September of 2002. In shows undisputedly what other biologists have already stated...the diminishing prairie chicken population would be decimated by the development of wind towers across the Flinthills.
9. "But we HAVE to have more electricity and this is a low impact way (environmentally) to get it." Excuse me, but wind developments use up to 85 times the land area and then impact twice that amount again due to high visibility and wildlife impact as compared to conventional energy plants. And again, remember that conventional plants must still be kept up and running to provide dependable energy. Plus, consider that the amount of energy produced by 1000 wind towers located throughout the Flinthills could be saved if everyone would replace their most used conventional light bulbs with energy saving florescent bulbs. Other energy saving appliances and practices could save five times the energy produced by those 1000 towers that would be visible throughout most of the Flinthills.

I could continue on for pages, but just as I ask you not to believe everything the wind energy companies are telling you, I do not expect you to believe everything I say either. Instead, I challenge you to do some research yourself. There is plenty of material out there. Check the Internet, type in Wind Energy and read what the wind companies say, PLUS what other findings are coming to light around the country by people who do not stand to profit as the wind companies do, and even by experts who used to work for and promote wind energy. The only big money to be made in this is by the wind companies at the expense of the taxpayers! Check into protecttheflinthills.org and their links. Check with the electric companies, most

of them are not looking forward to being forced to buy unreliable energy at a higher cost. RESEARCH AND READ as much as you can. Be informed; don't buy into easy promises.

The Flinthills comprise the largest native tallgrass prairie left undisturbed. No one would think of putting wind towers on the edge of the Grand Canyon, or in Yellowstone, yet the Flinthills are arguably just as unique, and even more agriculturally vital, both to the U.S. and as a learning resource for the world. We argued several years ago that we who lived in the Flinthills had been protecting and preserving it for hundreds of years and would continue to do so without Government intervention. Will we live up to that claim?

Am I a NIMBY (Not In My BackYard)? You Bet! But more than that, after much research, I would ask the politically unpopular question...given that wind energy has had almost 30 subsidized years to prove itself, but is still economically NOT viable, is unreliable, inefficient, and has a negative environmental impact,.... Is Wind Energy really efficient enough or productive enough to be supported anywhere?

In other words...Does the Emperor really have any clothes on at all?

Respectfully submitted,

Rose Z. Bacon