

Open letter

Dear Editor:

An open letter to my local newspapers, local elected representatives, statewide representatives, and most importantly, to the Public Service Commission.

As both an electrical engineer and long time resident of Greenbrier County, I attended the recent meeting regarding Invenergy's planned wind turbine project for our county with great interest. On the surface, wind energy seems like a wonderful idea—an inexpensive and pollution-free way of meeting our needs while still protecting our environment. In fact, our national legislators thought it such a good idea that they enacted huge tax incentives for companies to develop such projects.

However, with much research, and after hearing from people that live where such projects have already been completed, I have come to realize that my initial impression was exactly opposite of the reality. To allow Invenergy to proceed with their planned project would be a disaster for Greenbrier County.

One point of concern is the so-called "green credits" that Invenergy will receive and be able to sell. In the twisted logic of today's regulations, since Invenergy is generating "clean power" they get a "pollution credit" which they can then sell to another company, and which then allows that other company to legally generate more pollution. In a way, that means these "wind factories" will essentially increase pollution, and no matter what Invenergy tells us, there is nothing stopping them from selling these pollution credits to their lessee, Westvaco, so the added pollution is right in our backyard. In other words, there's the very real possibility that this project could mean a net gain of pollution in Greenbrier County.

Previous projects have been associated with huge numbers (thousands!) of bat kills, so these turbines actually threaten to alter the ecosystem all on their own. Each turbine contains hundreds of gallons of flammable hydraulic fluid and one lightning strike could cause a terrible forest fire that would be an incredible burden to our dedicated and courageous local volunteer fire-fighters.

These so-called "green credits" and other ecological threats are really just the proverbial "tip of the iceberg", an iceberg that Invenergy is doing their best to keep submerged. They paint a rosy picture, but you get a much better view if you consider places where such projects already exist (or have existed previously).

Invenergy is not even claiming that the power they generate will lower our local electric bills. It's all headed for the power hungry urban areas in the northeast U.S. There's nothing inexpensive about their power, either.

To start, it's you and I and every other taxpayer that's paying for their project. From what I learned listening to their company spokesman, they'll get back two-thirds of what they invest in tax subsidies alone.

In places in Europe where they're decades ahead of the U.S. in wind power, the installation of wind turbines has increased their overall cost of power. I've read that Denmark, which generates more power from wind than any other country in Europe, also has the highest electric rates.

The power produced by these "wind factories" is extremely undependable, so their installation does not save the need to have traditional power plants, and the irregular nature of the power produced can cause problems on the power grid. Numerous projects both here and abroad have already been abandoned.

I felt a bit like I was getting "hustled" when I attended Invenergy's presentation in Williamsburg last week. They claim their goal is to have their turbines "at least one mile" from any dwelling, but all you need to do is look at their maps to see it's a goal they have no chance of even coming close to meeting. I've read that people living within a mile of these behemoths will be subjected to a constant whooshing sound, which sounds to me like some form of mental torture. The wind towers are so huge that you can actually feel them vibrating the ground from almost the same distance.

Even if you're lucky enough to live a safe distance from one,

it's going to spoil the back-country you love to visit (e.g. Cold Knob). Large tracts of land will be cut off from hunters and hikers — some of the best wild country remaining in the U.S. One of our main industries in West Virginia is tourism. Brochures, TV ads and web sites that promote our great state are filled with views of ridge tops. How will they look with huge behemoth wind turbines strung along the view?

Invenergy thinks that they can "pull a fast one" on some unsuspecting West Virginians. There are places out in the Midwest with a much more dependable supply of wind where they could plant their turbines. They're hoping that they can get their project through before anyone realizes what a disaster it is for local residents. They're not doing this out of a desire to generate "clean power." They're doing it for the money — for the huge tax subsidy that we'll all have to pay.

Greenbrier County residents have so much to lose and absolutely nothing to gain if this project goes through, and anyone that considers the facts will clearly come to the same conclusion.

I urge our national Senators and Congressmen to look closely at the federal tax incentives for wind power projects. Take a lead from our European neighbors who have been there and done that. The environ-

is the "hottest button" issue. Our representatives need to climb on board quickly or get left behind come Election Day. Respectfully,
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ents. From what I saw at the meeting in Williamsburg, they will find no local support for this project, and in fact, they will discover extreme opposition. We all know that the one thing that speaks louder than big corporate donations is a

ment and West Virginia would both fare better if those incentives were shifted to clean coal technologies. I urge our Governor (who appoints people to the PSC that will make the final decision) and our local legislators to lis-