

# Open letter to Co. Commission

To experience wind turbines for myself I traveled north on Nov. 6 to the 44 wind turbines already in place on Backbone Mountain in Tucker County. From a good distance out my first reaction was not of revulsion but more of curiosity. After all, we're being told this is the wave of the future. Wind companies have arrived at our doorstep with this giant prototype saying this is "state-of-the-art" wind harvesting equipment. They seem unaware that by scaling up to such a size their wind energy collectors inadvertently become the new focal point for miles around. Heritage mountain views millions of years in the making are altered during one building season. The wind industry lacks a proven track record in the East—where winds are admittedly erratic. Their overall efficiency has been questioned because they produce nothing when winds are too high or too low. The 15-mile long string of turbines targeted for Greenbrier County will be a very inefficient use of space. A modern 500 Mw baseline plant will produce six to eight times more power with just a two-acre footprint.

For as long as I can recall West Virginia has promoted its Wild and Wonderful characteristics and industry weary tourists have flocked to our state for the mountains majesty, wild life, and natural beauty, free from the stamp of industrialization. If the wind industry's plan for the entire Allegheny Front is to pound giant metal towers onto the tops of all our tallest ridges, we should be aware that our state will lose its Wild flavor and take on the appearance of "one more expanse of land that has come under modern man's domination."

If it is truly necessary to erect these monstrosities, then some compensation must be offered to the tourist industry, because when people can no longer get a sense that this area is Wild, Wonderful, and undisturbed, they will look elsewhere for their solace. The impact to the forest habitat will extend well beyond the 500 acres cleared and leveled for these turbines. Do we really

want to tamper with the billions of dollars that come in statewide from hunting revenues? Also, the landowners in the shadows of the turbines who will suffer economic loss from declining property values need to be addressed. This is a very real and documented fact. When wind turbines go up surrounding property values go down.

West Virginia has a long history of serving our nations energy needs while still managing to keep some of its scenic beauty intact.

We should reject the argument that everything must be "useful" and that every place and every aspect of life should be commercialized, because at this point we are putting Greenbrier County's future economic potential at risk by allowing the wind industry access to our loftiest vistas.

I'm told the key to any successful enterprise is identifying what customers like most about that enterprise and showcasing that. I'm confident that if you asked tourists what they like most about Greenbrier County they would tell you its "long unobstructed ridgelines sloping down to picturesque valleys." They see this county as paradise and erecting 400-foot wind turbines atop those very mountains majesty could prove to be a bigger blunder for the tourist draw than New Coke was for the soft drink industry.

If instead, Greenbrier County officials recognize our natural beauty is a far greater resource than the wind and we stay true to the Wild and Wonderful claims of our state, tourism will

continue to play an ever-expanding role in our economic development.

Reducing national carbon emissions is not the responsibility of this commission, and some would argue wind power will do very little to alleviate the problem. The scope of this commission should focus on what is truly the best future for Greenbrier County. Wild and Wonderful policies have helped get us the admiration our county deserves. I think we should stay the course.

Sincerely,  
David Buhrman

MOUNTAIN  
MESSENGER  
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