

Wind energy controversy grows

By David Cottrill

"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder," Dave Groberg, project developer for Invenergy Wind LLC told 60 members of Mountain Communities for Responsible Energy (MCRE) Tuesday at Williamsburg's community center. "While many people

find wind turbines graceful and attractive, others disagree." He was referring to the 131 wind turbines his Chicago-based company hopes to erect on the mountain ridges of northwestern Greenbrier County.

Groberg took issue with several assertions made by MCRE members last week as reported in this newspaper. He said the 20 permanent jobs created will not be minimum wage jobs, but will pay an average of \$35,000 with benefits. He insisted the towers would not adversely affect the availability of any land

that is currently available for hunting, fishing, or recreation.

He said the nearest residence to the project would be more than one mile away, and that the majority would be four miles distance. He said wind farms have fostered dramatic growth in tourism.

Groberg asserted that at 5,000 feet there is virtually no way residents will hear auditory evidence of a turbine. He

assured that no endangered species had been sighted in the project area.

County resident John Stroud presented the views of author

and energy expert Eric Rosenbloom. "On a small scale," Rosenbloom explains, "where a turbine directly supplies the users and the fluctuating production can be stored, wind can contribute to a home, school, factory, office building, or even small village's electric-

ity. But this simply does not work on a large scale to supply the grid. Even the small benefits claimed by their promoters are far outstripped by the huge negative impacts.

"It is wise to diversify the sources of our energy. But the

money and legislative effort invested in large-scale wind generation could be spent much more effectively to achieve the goal of reducing our use of fossil and nuclear fuels ... Wind farms do not bring about any reduction in the use of conventional power plants.

"Because of the intermittency and variability of the wind, conventional power plants must be kept running at full capacity to meet the actual demand for electricity. Most cannot simply be turned on and off as the wind dies and rises, and the quick ramping up and down of those that can would actually increase the output of pollution.

"In hilly areas (such as Greenbrier County), many existing roads are inadequate for getting all the equipment into the area — huge tower sections and rotor blades. Erosion, disruption of water flow, destruction of wild habitat and plant life would continue with the presence of access roads, power lines, transformers, the tower sites themselves. Each tower

requires trees to be cleared. Vegetation would be kept down with herbicides, further poisoning the soil and water.

"The energy companies claim that they increase the local tax base. But that is more than offset by the loss of open land, the loss of tourism, the stagnation or decrease in property values, the tax credits they enjoy, the taxes and fees consumers must pay to subsidize the industry. Even surveys by wind promoters show that a quarter to a third of visitors would no longer come if turbines are installed. That is a huge loss in areas that depend on tourism.

"Wind power stations are not parks. They are industrial and commercial installations. They do not belong in wilderness areas. It makes no sense to tackle one environmental problem by creating another."

THIS ARTICLE WAS LAYED OUT IMPROPERLY AND WAS UNREADABLE
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