

Opposition to wind factories cited

By David Cottrill

As Chicago-based Invenergy plans a wind generation factory across the scenic mountains of northwestern Greenbrier County, numerous voices have been raised in protest (see op-ed page). Two thoughtful critics, one local, are cited here.

Science writer Eric Rosenbloom, in a September article entitled "A Problem With Wind Power," says wind-generated power has been a major failure all over Western Europe. "The Danish government has canceled plans for three offshore wind farms planned for 2008 and has scheduled the with-

drawal of subsidies from existing sites.

"Spain began withdrawing subsidies in 2002. Germany reduced tax breaks to wind power, and construction drastically slowed down.

"Switzerland also is cutting subsidies ... the Netherlands decommissioned 90 turbines in 2004. Many Japanese utilities severely limit the amount of wind-generated power they buy, because of the instability they cause. For the same reason, Ireland in December 2003 halted all new wind power connections to the national grid.

"In 2004, Australia reduced the level of renewable energy that utilities are required to buy. In the U.K., the *Telegraph* has reported that rather than providing cheaper energy, wind power costs the electric companies 50 pounds sterling per megawatt-hour compared to 15 pounds sterling for conventional power.

Rosenbloom cites a number of reasons. "The rated generating capacity only occurs during 100 percent ideal conditions, typically a sustained wind of 30 mph. In high winds, ironically, the turbines must be stopped because they are easily damaged. High-demand periods of both cold and heat (typically) correspond with periods of low wind.

"The European Union published the results of a 5-year investigation ... finding noise complaints to be valid and that noise levels could not be predicted before developing the site.

"Only a gravelly 'swishing' sound may be heard directly beneath the turbine, but farther away the resulting sound of several towers together has been described to be as loud as a motorcycle, like aircraft continually passing overhead, a 'brick wrapped in a towel turn-

ing in a tumble drier,' 'as if someone were mixing cement in the sky, 'like a train that never arrives,' 'much like the throbbing bass of a neighboring disco.' It may be why horses who are completely calm around traffic and heavy construction are known to become very upset when they approach wind turbines."

A letter published here several weeks ago affords a local perspective. John Echols, DDS, of Williamsburg wrote, "A few years ago, my cousin was confronted by a stranger near his home and dairy farm. He was told by the arrogant man that a power line would be built over his farm. He said there was nothing he could do about it. Wind towers are going to be built in the Cold Knob area with the same determined arrogance, over the objections of resident landowners.

"These 400-foot generators are unsightly and noisy. They run only when the wind is perfect and generate only 20 percent of their rated capacity to send out to the power grid. West Virginia gets absolutely nothing in terms of taxes and compensation for the immediate loss of property values.

The original developers take their money (subsidies) and run. The windmills are sold to other corporate entities with no regard to continuity, maintenance, or responsibility. This is a classic case of corporate GREED. It will be of no benefit to anyone in the state of West Virginia."

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