

Wind Turbine Views Not Simplistic  
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Opposing views on installation of wind turbines has turned neighbors into enemies. However, categorizing the issue as landowners wanting to preserve the landscape versus those wanting to augment income is both misleading and simplistic.

Given only these opposites, those favoring turbines for income must also want to destroy the landscape while those opposing tower complexes value view sheds, but not income or property rights.

No supporter of large scale wind energy conversion systems is being faulted for desiring income or use of property to advantage. The great objection is to the destruction of prairie and impingement of other landowner rights for the purpose of farming government subsidies. Without taxpayer-funding, there would be no debate because no business would otherwise stick its neck out for a losing prospect.

Unwilling to continue draining the economy with its eleven various subsidies, the German government decided in late 2003 to shut off their 40,000 turbines. If German technology couldn't make wind energy lucrative, how can anyone expect a few hundred behemoths trundling across our prairie to provide sustainable energy?

Some rationalize that sacrificing one natural resource to exploit another will reduce dependence on foreign oil.... Whether we buy oil or not has no effect on the geopolitical importance of petro-nations. As to reduction of other energy forms, we could cover the entire country with turbines and not achieve energy independence.

Wabaunsee County is zoned agricultural. Primary land use is reserved for agriculture production. Prairie grass consumed by livestock is converted to edible protein for humans. Pasture burning and livestock waste ensure sustainability of grasses. This symbiosis is both simple and grand, requiring no additional mechanics. Root systems of Flint Hills grasses capture carbon, cleansing impurities from the air for the entire world. You can't get any greener than this.

Contrast this to the interest of landowners wanting to blast 30 feet deep into one of the world's most beneficial carbon sinks, then replacing prairie with 188 cubic yards of concrete per pad, tunneling to connect turbines to transmission lines, miles of access roads, and 350 foot towers with spinning blades the size of Boeing 747s. Some call this attractive, progressive and green. Others find it intrusive, regressive and destructive.

As to the issue of property rights, if you bought land zoned agriculture, you are entitled to use your land for agriculture. The Flint Hills in its current form of range and meadow is low impact and sustainable, providing food, feed, income and a clean environment.

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