

To the Editor: Chase County Leader

Regarding the recent article on Wind Farms, as a native Kansan and Chase County land-owner (currently, a California resident), I hope Chase County considers closely the decision to add wind farms to the Flint Hills landscape.

Southern California is home to one of the largest wind farms in the country, in one of the windiest places on earth-the San Geronio Pass, located between Los Angeles and Palm Springs. Thousands of gigantic windmills stretch across a desert moonscape-of which there is no shortage-like an army of Star War creatures stuck in cement. While this scene provides an interesting break to a monotonous drive along Interstate 10, I can't think of anything less appealing to the eye if located in the unique Flint Hills.

As to "diversifying" the economy, the facts provided by the California example should open some eyes. Even with the nation's largest wind farms, wind power provides only a tiny fraction of California's energy needs. Operating and distribution costs make it comparatively expensive, and too much wind (velocity), too little wind, high maintenance and uncertain energy demand cycles, on contribute to idle windmills. Furthermore, newly proposed legislation from the Bush Administration and FERC to form a national power market will add even more sources of energy to an already competitive marketplace.

Finally, be aware of giant energy companies bearing gifts. California is still reeling from an energy crisis brought in large part by the fraudulent acts of these same companies. Current tax incentives provide benefits for alternative energy development and accelerated depreciation to a tainted industry starved for earnings, and battered by corporate fraud and mismanagement. A short-term accounting benefit with little regard to the people or land of Chase County is the likely incentive here.

If California can be played like a fiddle by these guys, a small county in Kansas should move forward with great caution when dealing with them.

Keith C. Winsor  
Laguna Niguel, Calif.