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Subject: Oregon wind farms whip up noise, health concerns | OregonLive.com
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Oregon wind farms whip up noise, health co



(<http://connect.oregonlive.com/user/dcockle/index.html>) By Richard Cockle, The Oregonian

(<http://connect.oregonlive.com/user/dcockle/posts.html>)

on March 26, 2009 at 9:00 PM, updated September 30, 2009 at 4:21 PM

Print (http://blog.oregonlive.com/news_impact/print.html?entry=/2009/03/oregon_wind_farms_whip_up_nois.html)



(http://blog.oregonlive.com/news_impact/2009/03/wind3.JPG)Thomas

Boyd/The Oregonian Turbines surround a small settlement near the Columbia River in eastern Oregon. While many people see wind enerov as a clean alternative to fossil fuels. some who live near them complain about noise and other

Photo



problems.

BOARDMAN -- Dozens of wind turbines west of Boardman are so noisy, nearby homeowners say they're keeping them awake at night and even making them ill.

"It's not healthy for us," Dan Williams said of the 240-foot-tall turbines he can see from his hilltop home. "It's like a freight train that's not coming or going."

Williams is among neighbors along Oregon 74 demanding that Morrow County enforce state noise regulations on the Willow Creek Wind Energy Project or revoke its land-use permit.

More than that, they're part of an emerging backlash to an alternative-energy technology that most revere as clean, green and essential to reducing emissions that contribute to climate change. As turbines sprout across Oregon, people who live near the sweeping blades are raising their voices about noise, spoiled views, lowered home values and health risks.

In January, a Massachusetts company yanked plans for a wind farm outside The Dalles after opponents complained that it would be too close to homes, ruin spectacular Columbia River Gorge vistas and put wildlife at risk.

Other critics, including some in Oregon, cite work by a New York physician who coined the term "wind turbine syndrome" to describe effects -- such as headaches, dizziness and memory loss -- of living near the machines.

"This thing is not rare," Dr. Nina Pierpont of Malone, N.Y., said of the syndrome, "but it doesn't affect everybody."

Industry representatives dismiss such talk. Shawna Seldon, spokeswoman for the American Wind Energy Association in Washington, D.C., said her group is unaware of any peer-reviewed research linking wind turbines and negative health effects.

Likewise, Mike Logsdon of Invenergy, the 6-year-old Chicago company that built the Willow Creek farm, said of neighbors' complaints: "We don't believe there is anything

Wind energy facts

- Texas, Iowa, California, Minnesota, Washington, Colorado, Oregon: States, in order, that produce more than 1,000 megawatts of wind energy
- 25,170 megawatts: U.S. wind-generating capacity
- 8,358 megawatts: Amount added last year, enough to power more than 2 million homes
- 44 million tons: Amount of carbon emissions that wind energy keeps out of the atmosphere, about equal to taking more than 7 million cars off the road
- 40 percent: Amount that U.S. demand for



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Most Common



(http://blog.oregonlive.com/news_impact/2009/03/wind2.JPG)Richard

Cockle/The Oregonian Wind turbines rise behind the home of Dan Williams (right). He and Clyde Smith, neighbors who live along Oregon 74 between Boardman and Arlington, are among residents who say the turbines exceed state noise limits. Williams says they spoiled his view and often wake him up.

Williams, a 40-year-old construction contractor, said the Willow Creek turbines' swish-swish and thump-bang often wake him up. His live-in girlfriend, Heidi Hartman, 34, said she's "starting to notice internal effects, jitters" from the vibration and noise.

Wind-energy companies downplay the noise, Williams said. "They said this is going to be about as loud as your refrigerator in your house, which is a crock."

Neighbor Mike Eaton, who also lives within a half-mile of a Willow Creek turbine, said the spinning blades are noisier than people realize. He's measured 67 decibels with a handheld monitor beside his home, he said, much higher than the 36 decibels allowed by state law.

Not only that, the retired furniture maker said, "I can hear windmills at my house from Arlington, 12 miles away."

Eaton, 61, said the turbines give him nausea by aggravating inner-ear and balance problems he's had since a 1966-67 tour in Vietnam subjected him to the constant pounding of an Army 155 mm artillery piece.

"I cannot live where I'm living now with these decibels and vibrations," he said.

Officials pay attention

Carla McLane, Morrow County planning director, said health issues never came up during planning for the 72-megawatt Willow Creek project. The county approved the farm in 2005, and turbines began operating this past December.

But Ryan Swinburnson, an attorney for Morrow County, said officials take the neighbors' complaints seriously.

"The county's position is if there is a violation, the violating party needs to correct it," he said.

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With elimination of an Oregon Department of Environmental Quality noise-control program in 1991, the counties are on their own, said the DEQ's Frank Messina in Bend.

Torres, the state Department of Energy spokesman, also doesn't dismiss the complaints. Officials "still don't know enough about the noise factor" because little research has been done, he said.

"We know more about the effects on birds and bats," he said.

Invenergy has hired a company to gauge noise from the Willow Creek farm's 48 turbines, said Logsdon, the spokesman, which should fulfill a county demand for independent monitoring. Invenergy expects results in about a month, he said.

Ultimately, the company could buy noise easements from the nearby homeowners or possibly buy the properties or close turbines close to homes. Or the homeowners, if they aren't satisfied with the county's response, could pursue their complaints in court.

"An industrial plague"

Pierpont, the doctor, who has an upcoming book about the dangers of wind farms, says turbines should never be built within two miles of homes. The low-frequency sound affects the inner ear, she said, causing problems such as sleep and learning disorders, headaches, dizziness, anger, irritability, depression, memory loss, tinnitus (ringing in the ears), mood swings and panic attacks.

As wind machines proliferate near where people gather, she said, "wind turbine syndrome will likely become an industrial plague."

Money is another factor, straining relationships among usually friendly rural neighbors. While the machines bother some landowners, they're a revenue bonanza for others. Seldon, the industry spokeswoman, said landowners typically get lease payments of \$2,000 to \$4,000 a year per megawatt.

In Oregon, Sherman County farmer John Hildebrand, 82, for example, earns about \$30,000 in annual lease payments for the 11 turbines operating on about three acres of his land. He knows of other farmers, he said, who get much more.

That has Logsdon suspecting sour grapes.

"Where people don't have turbines on their property and aren't being paid for them, they don't want to look at them on their neighbors' property," he said.

But Williams thinks energy companies should compensate not only the landowners but other affected homeowners as well. He wants Oregon and its rural counties to enact setbacks that would place turbines farther from homes.

"If the setbacks were done properly," he said, "none of this ... would have happened."

-- *Richard Cockle*; rcockle@oregonwireless.net
(<mailto:rcockle@oregonwireless.net>)

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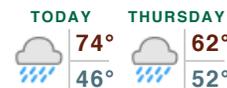
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Wind turbine noise recommendation unlikely to end debate

By [Kevin Miller](#), BDN Staff

Posted Aug. 07, 2011, at 6:41 p.m.

Last modified Aug. 08, 2011, at 5:04 a.m.

Staff with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection have waded into the debate over noise from commercial wind turbines by recommending a slight reduction in the decibel level that could trigger a noise violation for wind farms located near homes or businesses.

But the recommendation — expected to be presented to the Maine Board of Environmental Protection on Monday — appears unlikely to satisfy a vocal group of activists who insist poorly sited wind farms threaten Maine's public health and natural beauty.

DEP staff will present two options to the Board of Environmental Protection during a meeting this Monday.

The first will essentially maintain the status quo in terms of allowable noise levels from wind turbines near neighboring houses and other "protected locations," allowing up to 55 decibels during the day and 45 decibels between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. The draft rules do, however, seek to standardize the measurement and reporting process.

The second option would also keep the 55-decibel daytime limit in protected locations but would reduce the nighttime limit to 42 decibels. The second option contains the same recommendations on the measurement process.

Ever since wind power companies began eyeing Maine for developments about a decade ago, the Department of Environmental Protection has applied a decades-old noise standard to wind energy projects.

Critics of Maine's push to become a major player in the wind power industry have argued, however, that the state needed rules specific to the unique characteristics of wind turbines. After gathering enough petition signatures, Friends of Maine's Mountains filed paperwork to force the Board of Environmental Protection to begin the rule-making process to address wind turbine noise.

Chris O'Neil, a consultant who works with Friends of Maine's Mountains, said Sunday that the organization was not impressed with the DEP staff recommendation. O'Neil said his organization presented "overwhelming evidence" documenting public health problems from wind turbine noise at those levels.

"We're not too pleased," O'Neil said. "The two options being presented by the staff are the status quo and status quo-light."

Instead, his organization has argued that 35 decibels at night is a more appropriate limit in Maine given the types of quiet, rural locations where wind turbines are being sighted.

Turbine noise has emerged as arguably the biggest public relations headache for the wind power



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industry in Maine, although some critics also strongly object to the sight of the 400-foot-tall structures on ridgelines and mountaintops. The total number of turbines operating in Maine is approaching 200, with many more in the permitting process.

A relatively small number of residents living near existing wind farms have complained of lost sleep and physical sickness as a result of turbine noise, low-frequency noise or vibrations as well as sunlight or shadow flicker caused by the spinning blades. Some say the projects have ruined the value of their homes.

Such complaints surfaced soon after Maine’s first wind farm — a 28-turbine facility in the Aroostook County town of Mars Hill — began operating more than five years ago. And in late July, several neighbors upset with the three-turbine Fox Islands Wind project on the island of Vinalhaven filed suit against the DEP, claiming senior officials have failed to enforce Maine’s noise regulations against the developer.

Overall, however, wind energy continues to enjoy overwhelming support from the Maine public, according to recent polls. And proponents of the industry point out that while most investment dried up or slowed down due to the economy, wind power companies have invested an estimated \$1 billion in Maine in recent years.

In oral testimony to the board last month and written submissions, industry representatives warned that the rules could negatively impact wind power development and, therefore, job creation in Maine. They pointed out that municipalities are already free to adopt noise or setback limits more stringent than the state’s.

They also urged the board to take more time to consider expert testimony on the complex scientific issues surrounding noise and potential health impacts.

“It is critical in setting public policy ... the board act on the basis of sound science and has the benefit of a process that allows for informed decision-making,” wrote the team of attorneys for the firm Verrill Dana, representing the wind energy industry, in a July 18 submission.

“Unfortunately, the rule-making process, which here included a single day of public hearing, limited time for presentation of expert testimony and no opportunity for cross-examination of experts, may not facilitate the board’s understanding of the technical issues that lie at the heart of the proposed changes.”

The board is expected to discuss the draft recommendation and could suggest several changes. The staff recommendation would then be posted for public comment.

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For Those Near, the Miserable Hum of Clean Energy

By TOM ZELLER Jr.
Published: October 5, 2010

VINALHAVEN, Me. — Like nearly all of the residents on this island in Penobscot Bay, Art Lindgren and his wife, Cheryl, celebrated the arrival of three giant [wind turbines](#) late last year. That was before they were turned on.

[Enlarge This Image](#)



Matt McNinnis for The New York Times

Residents living less than a mile from the \$15 million wind facility in Vinalhaven, Me., say the industrial whoosh-and-whoop of the 123-foot blades is making life unbearable.

“In the first 10 minutes, our jaws dropped to the ground,” Mr. Lindgren said. “Nobody in the area could believe it. They were so loud.”

Now, the Lindgrens, along with [a dozen or so neighbors living less than a mile](#) from the \$15 million wind facility here, say the industrial whoosh-and-whoop of the 123-foot blades is making life in this otherwise tranquil corner of the island unbearable.

They are among a small but growing number of families and homeowners across the country who say they have learned the hard way that wind power — a clean alternative to electricity from fossil fuels — is not without emissions of its own.

Lawsuits and complaints about turbine noise, vibrations and subsequent lost property value have cropped up in Illinois, Texas, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Massachusetts, among other states.

In one case in DeKalb County, Ill., at least 38 families have sued to have 100 turbines removed from a wind farm there. A judge rejected a motion to

dismiss the case in June.

Like the Lindgrens, many of the people complaining the loudest are reluctant

converts to the antiwind movement.

“The quality of life that we came here for was quiet,” Mrs. Lindgren said. “You don’t live in a place where you have to take an hour-and-15-minute ferry ride to live next to an industrial park. And that’s where we are

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right now.”

The wind industry has long been dogged by a vocal minority bearing all manner of complaints about turbines, from routine claims that they ruin the look of pastoral landscapes to more elaborate allegations that they have direct physiological impacts like rapid heart beat, nausea and blurred vision caused by the ultra-low-frequency sound and vibrations from the machines.

For the most extreme claims, there is little independent backing.

Last year, the American Wind Energy Association, a trade group, along with its Canadian counterpart, assembled a panel of doctors and acoustical professionals to examine the potential health impacts of wind turbine noise. In a paper published in December, the panel concluded that “there is no evidence that the audible or sub-audible sounds emitted by wind

turbines have any direct adverse physiological effects.”

[A separate study](#) financed by the Energy Department concluded late last year that, in aggregate, property values were unaffected by nearby wind turbines.

Numerous studies also suggest that not everyone will be bothered by turbine noise, and that much depends on the context into which the noise is introduced. A previously quiet setting like Vinalhaven is more likely to produce irritated neighbors than, say, a mixed-use suburban setting where ambient noise is already the norm.

Of the 250 new wind farms that have come online in the United States over the last two years, about dozen or so have generated significant noise complaints, according to Jim Cummings, the founder of the [Acoustic Ecology Institute](#), an online clearinghouse for information on sound-related environmental issues.

In the Vinalhaven case, an audio consultant hired by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection determined last month that the 4.5-megawatt facility was, at least on one evening in mid-July when Mr. Lindgren collected sound data, in excess of the state’s nighttime sound limits. The developer of the project, [Fox Island Wind](#), has contested that finding, and negotiations with state regulators are continuing.

In the moonlit woods behind a neighbor’s property on a recent evening, Mr. Lindgren, a retired software engineer, clenched a small flashlight between his teeth and wrestled with a tangle of cables and audio recording equipment he uses to collect sound samples for filing complaints.

At times, the rustle of leaves was all that could be heard. But when the surface wind settled, a throbbing, vaguely jetlike sound cut through the nighttime air. “Right there,” Mr. Lindgren declared. “That would probably be out of compliance.”

Maine, along with many other states, puts a general limit on nighttime noise at 45 decibels — roughly equivalent to the sound of a humming refrigerator. A normal conversation is in the range of 50 to 60 decibels.

In almost all cases, it is not mechanical noise arising from the central gear box or nacelle of a turbine that residents react to, but rather the sound of the blades, which in modern turbines are mammoth appendages well over 100 feet long, as they slice through the air.

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Turbine noise can be controlled by reducing the rotational speed of the blades. But the turbines on Vinalhaven already operate that way after 7 p.m., and George Baker, the chief executive of Fox Island Wind — a for-profit arm of the island’s electricity co-operative — said that turning the turbines down came at an economic cost.

“The more we do that, the higher goes the price of electricity on the island,” he said.

A common refrain among homeowners grappling with sound issues, however, is that they were not accurately informed about the noise ahead of time. “They told us we wouldn’t hear it, or that it would be masked by the sound of the wind blowing through the trees,” said Sally Wylie, a former schoolteacher down the road from the Lindgrens. “I feel duped.”

Similar conflicts are arising in Canada, Britain and other countries. An appeals court in Rennes, France, recently ordered an eight-turbine wind farm to shut down between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. so residents could get some sleep.

Richard R. James, an acoustic expert hired by residents of Vinalhaven to help them quantify the noise problem, said there was a simpler solution: do not put the turbines so close to where people live.

“It would seem to be time for the wind utility developers to rethink their plans for duplicating these errors and to focus on locating wind turbines in areas where there is a large buffer zone of about a mile and one-quarter between the turbines and people’s homes,” said Mr. James, the principal consultant with [E-Coustic Solutions](#), based in Michigan.

Vinalhaven’s wind farm enjoys support among most residents, from ardent supporters of all clean energy to those who simply say the turbines have reduced their power bills. Deckhands running the ferry sport turbine pins on their hats, and bumper stickers seen on the island declare “Spin, Baby, Spin.”

“The majority of us like them,” said Jeannie Conway, who works at the island’s ferry office.

But that is cold comfort for Mrs. Lindgren and her neighbors, who say their corner of the island will never be the same.

“I remember the sound of silence so palpable, so merciless in its depths, that you could almost feel your heart stop in sympathy,” she said. “Now we are prisoners of sonic effluence. I grieve for the past.”

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: October 7, 2010

An article on Wednesday about the noise of wind turbines misstated the material of which turbine blades are made. They are typically made of fiberglass or plastic reinforced with carbon fiber, not steel.

A version of this article appeared in print on October 6, 2010, on page A1 of the New York edition.

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Living next to a wind turbine

July 1, 2009 by Phil Bloomstein

Phil Bloomstein of Freedom, Maine provides a gripping image of what his life is like living next to an industrial wind facility.

We have the distinct "privilege" of living 1,000 feet from tower T3 of the Beaver Ridge Wind Project. Freedom residents on both sides of Beaver Ridge live almost as close but none as close as my family and me. We have tower T3 literally staring us right in the face winter and summer.

In the summer the tower and blades almost disappear when you are by the house, but the tower and blades still hang above the house as you walk in our lower gardens. And, you can view the wind turbine from many other spots on our land. As disturbing as the visual presence of a nearly 400-foot wind turbine is, and its occasional hours of turbine-blade flicker, all that pales in comparison to the noise the turbines often produce. I would dare say we live in one of the noisiest neighborhoods in Waldo County.

Let's get one thing straight. I'm not claiming my life has been ruined. I'm not looking for sympathy. I'm sure many of you have suffered personal tragedies much worse than having a wind turbine built next to you. What I am asking for is the truth and some justice.

I want to present you with a credible picture of the turbine's effects on the quality of our family's home life. I also want you to understand that the town of Freedom's planning and permitting of the Beaver Ridge Wind Project was extremely flawed. It was marked by deceptions, poor planning, and small-town politics at its worst. In my opinion, the project has proven that many good folks in the town of Freedom were outwitted by CES now Beaver Ridge Wind. Many community members were so pro green they were susceptible to the developer's deceptive practices and failed to be responsible to us and our neighbors.

My challenge is to convince you that I am telling the truth. And that others, including my neighbors, the folks in Mars Hill and as far away as the Midwest, are also telling the truth about the disturbing noise created by these machines. Living next to a wind turbine is, to say the least, a very unpleasant experience.

Good-meaning people write me and say; "We just don't get it". They tell me they have visited the Beaver Ridge turbines several times in different wind conditions, and it just doesn't seem that bad. I also visited wind turbines. I visited them with the knowledge that one was going to be built very close to my house. I came away thinking living next to one was going to be somewhat annoying but that it probably was going to be OK.

I was encouraged by the promises of Beaver Ridge Wind (then called CES). The very same promises that were never kept.

What my neighbors and I have experienced has been much more negative than we had ever imagined.

What is it really like living next to the turbines? There are "good days," but there are way too many bad ones. Although the noise is almost always there, it is not constant in its intensity or type of sound. In minutes it can turn from an almost tolerable drone to a pulsating nightmare so oppressive that any outdoor activity is challenging. The noise also penetrates into the house. On many nights, as soon as you turn off the TV or stereo you immediately hear them. At least four to eight times a month they are very loud. The night noise can be especially disturbing. Some nights there is a loud pulsating noise that lasts right into the morning, on those days we get discouraged. We think that this can't be good for our health and we might as well give up and sell out.

The wind industry, often in concert with well-meaning government officials and environmental activists, uses all its power to diminish complaints and convince the general public that "wind farms" are quiet and that most folks don't mind living next to them.

When CES (now called Beaver Ridge Wind) came to Freedom, they assured us the turbines would be quiet. During the permitting process, they presented a study showing the noise level at our home would hardly ever be above 45 dBa. When all was said and done, the noise levels exceeded the promised levels (often twice as loud). When I asked Beaver Ridge Wind what they were going to do about the noise, they looked me right in the eyes and said they never really exactly promised us that.

The developer's clever promises and use of wind industry propaganda made it easy for the townspeople to support the project even though the setbacks in Freedom were among the weakest in the country. The setbacks were even below manufacturer's suggested distances at property lines. It is my intent to show how the townspeople were misled. But for now, understand the developers presented a wind study they commissioned saying the sound levels at my house would rarely exceed 45 decibels. The truth is, sound levels are regularly over the promised level, and on many windy nights, can be twice as loud.

Victims of poorly planned wind turbine developments from Mars Hill, Maine to the Midwest are not believed. Fine citizens with the highest of motives dismiss these folks as whiners or less than credible.

I have heard people say, you'll get used to it. You don't. There are many contributing factors to this. A few are that the noise changes with wind speed, the types of noise produced, wind direction and atmospheric pressure. The developers should have considered the fact that our home is on a side of a hill downwind from the prevailing wind. Documents can be found and downloaded on the Beaver Ridge Wind web site that explain, "in some hilly terrain where residents are located in sheltered dips or hollows downwind from the turbines, turbine sounds may carry further and be more audible."

Why was this not considered in our case?

There is the classic wind-energy comparison of a turbine's noise level to your refrigerator. First of all, at my house, the turbines are much louder and more annoying than my refrigerator. But let's assume the turbines do sound like my refrigerator. I ask you to imagine your fridge is always running and that also, you have one on your deck, in your garden, by the compost, next to the garage, three or four in your backyard, several well placed down your driveway, one at each door, one next to the grandkids' swing set, and don't forget the ones hanging outside your bedroom window.

Get the idea? I think you might find even your fridge noise a little annoying.

Then there are the possible negative health effects. Remember, the tower is almost 400-feet tall at the tip of the blades and we are 1,060 feet from the middle of the base. So at times, the tips of the blades are about 930 feet away. After a night of pulsating turbine noise that continues right into the morning, (no matter what studies prove) I feel as if this can't be good for my family. I can only imagine what it would be like if one were predisposed to headaches, depression or a sleep disorder.

Perhaps you are thinking, well someone has to suffer for the good of humanity, it might as well be the Bloomsteins. Maybe you are right, but does that give the developers and the wind-energy industry the right to lie about the impact? Beaver Ridge Wind and other projects in Maine are not municipal projects, these wind turbines are for profit. I might be less angry if they had said, OK your life is going to change and not in a good way. There will be a negative impact, you will be sacrificing the quiet rural life you once had for the good of the environment.

But no, they don't do that. They lie and tell your town you'll barely hear them and it will be like being in a quiet room or a library. They could be honest and tell you that it will be noisy at your home. Beaver Ridge Wind could have mentioned the fact that other people have chosen to sell out rather than live close to a wind turbine. Instead they show videos and PowerPoint slideshows with misleading and deceptive statements.

For us the damage is done. The turbines are up, and most likely, they are not coming down for a long time. So the question for my family and me is: What do we do? We have lived and worked on our property for the past 34 years. Do we leave the house we built, the gardens we've planted, the place my children and their children love? Or, do we stay and learn to deal with the noise, worry about unknown health hazards, keep windows closed at night in the summer, sleep with earplugs on loud nights - whatever it takes to stay sane?

We know our home will never be the same. If we do leave, what about the value of our house?

The industry will tell you house values go up or stay the same, but there are many studies which show quite the opposite.

No matter what we do our family now must fight for our rights. No one comes up to us and offers a solution. Oh, Beaver Ridge Wind might tell you they are working with us and in fact they are: but not until we approached them with our concerns. Beaver Ridge Wind never did a sound study after the turbines went into operation. Their basic approach is to say nothing, do nothing and only respond when the Bloomsteins or other neighbors complain, but not until then.

It has become evident to us that trying to be reasonable, open-minded and pro green has been rewarded by deceptive practices, small-town politics at its worst and a radically negative change to our lifestyle.

We struggle to figure out what to do. We want the truth to be known. We want to be believed. We seek justice in the form of adequate compensation. We also hope in some small way we can prevent others from suffering a similar fate.

Please don't be so zealous in your support of alternative energy that you allow an industry, even a green one, to avoid any reasonable regulations. They need to be held accountable. No company out for profit should be given a free pass.

My family and other families in similar situations should not be forced to seek compensation in the courts or make deals under conditions of confidentiality.

Maine needs to grow up when it comes to wind development. There is no need to repeat the mistakes that were made in Freedom and Mars Hill.

By BRENT RUNYON, Falmouth Enterprise, 2 September 2011

Falmouth Board of Health has received more than 90 complaints about the wind turbines in town since June 7. That total was filed by 11 residents reporting headaches, nausea, concentration problems, anxiety, anger and the inability to sleep.

Two-thirds of the complaints concern the Notus Clean Energy Wind Turbine in Falmouth Technology Park, while the remainder focused on Wind 1, the town-owned turbine at the Wastewater Treatment Facility. There were no complaints logged about any other turbines in town.

Suzanne C. Hobart of 476 Blacksmith Shop Road submitted nearly a third of the complaints, 27 in all, the most of any resident. Ms. Hobart lives about 1,900 feet from the Notus Clean Energy Turbine, and reported feeling pressure waves from the turbine, causing dizziness and migraine headaches. "My head pounded all day, can't sleep, think, use my yard. I fell over twice, threw up three times. Happening more frequently. Doctor finds nothing in body to cause," she wrote about the turbine's effects on June 17.

The disturbance from the turbine that day even knocked a picture off her mantle, she wrote. A few nights later, she wrote, "Even on a perfect breezeless day the wind up there pounds the thing into the brain," she wrote. "Seems louder on a day like this." Ms. Hobart reported that her symptoms continued to get worse.

On July 12, she wrote, "Dear God what do I have to do? Kill myself? I passed out the other day..I am spinning when I try to do anything here.... I hate everything now Weeping!"

But when the turbine was turned off on July 19, Ms. Hobart said her symptoms were immediately relieved. "It's off.. and life is totally different and just fine tonight..I get to sleep in my hard earned bedroom... with the windows open and fresh air. Much better!" she wrote. Ms. Hobart later wrote that her doctor told her a spinal fusion operation makes the resonance of the wind turbine worse. Her husband, Edward, also submitted two complaints.

Another resident, John J. Ford of 372 Blacksmith Shop Road, submitted 19 complaints reporting sleep disturbances, anxiety and headaches as a result of the Notus turbine.

Lawrence V. Worthington of 337 Blacksmith Shop Road submitted eight complaints. He wrote that Wind 1 and Notus Clean Energy turbines disturbed his sleep.

Almost all the complaints detail problems with noise and pressure changes from the turbines with the exception of one. Sheldon Lowenthal of 99 Ambleside Drive wrote that light flicker from Wind 1 hit his home for 30 minutes a day for a few weeks during the winter.

Apart from Mr. Lowenthal, J. Malcolm Donald of Ambleside Drive, and Mark J. Cool of Fire Tower Road, all the complaints came from residents on Blacksmith Shop Road.

Now, the Falmouth Board of Health is beginning to compare those responses with volumes of data recorded at the turbines.

The first order of business at the Falmouth Board of Health meeting last week was to determine what data board members wanted to review. Health Agent David W. Carignan said he was working with Falmouth Energy Coordinator Paul Gentile to compile the information for the board, but there is a tremendous amount of data available. Board members have access to more data than is relevant, Mr. Carignan said, including power generation, wind speeds, wind directions, angle of the nacelle, tilt of turbine blades, and heat of the oil running through the machine. "All we need is date, time, wind direction and wind speed," said board member John B. Waterbury, to compare to the complaints. Board member Stephen R. Rafferty said the data could be collected at 10-minute intervals, and each day would have 144 points.

Over a year, that would be more than 50,000 entries. "That's nothing," said Dr. Waterbury, who is also a biologist at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

Board member Jared V. Goldstone is researching the health effects of turbines and forwarded some recent articles to other board members via e-mail, but was not impressed with the quality of the scientific analysis he has found. He said most of the data was compiled from the reports of individuals. The only significant health effect reported in the study was moderate tiredness, he said.



Residents in wind-turbine shadows seek noise, other relief

By **Linda Kellett**

GateHouse News Service

Posted Sep 06, 2011 @ 09:03 PM

Fairfield, N.Y. —It's nothing but misery.

That's the assessment of town of Fairfield resident Monique Consolazio, who lives in the shadow of two of the towering wind turbines making up the Hardscrabble Wind Project. Hers is a plight shared by many who have lodged complaints against the global giant Iberdrola Renewables, based in Spain.

Davis Road resident James Salamone and his wife, June, are among others calling in complaints about noise, TV interference and light flickers since the turbines came online in late February.

Salamone has compared the loudest noises generated by the turbines to the take-off of a fighter jet. "It's like living within 50 yards of an Air Force base," he said recently. "It doesn't matter if the windows are closed or not."

He continued, "I don't know how long my wife and I can stand it. It's on and off. You can never get used to it."

Consolazio also compared the loudest noises to aircraft.

The alleged sound can be like a "jumbo jet hovering over your house."

Depending on the weather, the wind speed and the direction in which the turbine is turned, she said the turbines can also sound like an approaching giant, "Shazoom-bang;" a prolonged swooshing sound or nothing at all.

Between the noise issues and the unpleasant lighting effects, some residents have packed up and left town. Salamone's daughter, who formerly lived with her family in another Davis Road residence, is among them.

In connection with the noise complaints, the company recently completed sound-level monitoring at several targeted locations in the rural community.

As noted in the June 24 study summary issued to Iberdrola company officials Michael Clayton, Neil Habig and Scott McDonald, the testing was conducted by CH2M Hill in order to "assess if the sound levels attributable to the project complied with the project limit of 50 dBA [decibels]."

Engineer Mark Bastasch, who drew up the summary, maintains that while the overall measured level at times exceeded the maximum allowed 50 dBA, those incidents "corresponded to periods of extreme winds and were not attributable to the project."

He claimed that under extremely windy conditions, "the wind-induced noise and tree rustling is a contributing or dominate factor. As such, these events are not representative of a sound level attributable to the project. Outside of these limited high-wind events, the monitoring results do not indicated that the measured sound-level attributable to the project exceeds 50 dBA."

Town officials are expected to hold a special public meeting at the Fairfield Community Hall on Thursday, Sept. 15, at 6 p.m., in order to address the company's study.

Among those expected to be present that evening include an attorney hired by the town to deal with the turbine-related issues, an expert who's been looking at the company's sound-study data and town officials, who are expected to proceed with a separate study of their own in order to "make sure [Iberdrola's] numbers are correct," said town Supervisor Richard Souza.

He said the meeting date was based, in part, on the availability of the expert to meet with the town council and had nothing to do with the Sept. 13 primary election between Souza and Henry Crofoot. Both are Republicans seeking the town supervisor's post.

Citing the results of a preliminary sound study, conducted in 2008 before the wind farm project was approved, Salamone questioned the need for a third study.

In his view, the wind turbine operation exceeds allowed sound levels when combined with pre-project ambient noise levels at test sites on Davis Road.

An Iberdrola company spokesperson contacted late last week did not respond with a comment prior to press time.

Souza said the town's test is needed because the first was based on a model — and projected data.

As noted in the June 5, 2008, cover letter addressed to town of Fairfield officials by URS company official James P. Cowan and dealing with the Hardscrabble Wind Farm noise evaluation for Davis Road, Cowan noted the noise monitoring and modeling was conducted with the goal of "assisting [town officials] in evaluating the potential noise impact of the proposed [wind power] facility" on behalf of a Davis Road resident with noise sensitivities.

Souza said the town's test would be conducted in November or December after the foliage is gone in order to give all parties concerned a better idea of the problem.

The study recently concluded by Iberdrola and the proposed study to be undertaken for the town would both be based on actual noise-level data.

Neither the Salamones nor Consolazio believe it's realistic to hope Iberdrola will move the problem turbines from the areas around their homes. Both, however, are hopeful that measures can be taken to mitigate noise levels by taking the turbines out of service during windy conditions, for example.

In the meantime, the wind turbines have pitted neighbor against neighbor: Long-struggling farmers and other property owners generating revenue from the turbines have benefited from the project, and less fortunate residents — those who have reaped neither income, reductions in utility costs or tax relief — feel they've been unjustly treated by a company with deep pockets, a lot of legal and political clout, and time to wait them out.

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Naples hears from windmill supporter-turned -opponent

By **Emily McFaul**, correspondent
Daily Messenger

Posted May 09, 2009 @ 10:59 PM

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He said original plans called for white lights shining up in the air, like lights on an airport landing strip. Instead, the towers have flashing red lights, and Graham said he was shocked at their brightness and reach.

“My wife and I were coming back from Canandaigua at night, and I said, ‘My God, what have we done to our neighbors?’” he recalled.

Graham said, however, the yearly check wasn't the reason he and his wife signed the lease.

Rather, they were concerned about global warming.

“We thought we were going to do something good — that these things made good, clean, green energy,” he said.

Now, after logging hours of research on wind turbines, it seems like an inaccurate perception.

Though it's true that wind power is a renewable resource — unlike fossil fuels — Graham pointed out that the power produced is intermittent. When the wind doesn't blow, energy customers have to fall back on other sources like coal or nuclear power, which remain on stand-by in case they are needed.

As a participating landowner who has a lease with First Wind, Graham is viewed as a “co-applicant” of the developer under local law, and Cohocton officials have told him that rather than seeking assistance from the town, he must direct noise complaints directly to the company.

So far, Graham says he hasn't gotten a response to his calls to First Wind.

The town of Cohocton is taking a look, however, at complaints from non-participating landowners, and Supervisor Jack Zigenfus wrote a letter to First Wind last month saying the town may need to take action if noise levels don't comply with local laws or the terms of the development's special use permits. Sound monitoring done at property lines of non-participating landowners have so far shown that noise levels don't exceed permitted levels of 50 decibels, but Zigenfus pointed out that the levels may still exceed what

Naples, N.Y. — As the town of Naples continues to push for increased setbacks on wind towers planned near the Prattsburgh town line, Supervisor Frank Duserick continues to seek input from those who've had up-close experience with the turbines.

The Town Board most recently heard from Cohocton Town Justice Hal Graham, who signed a lease with First Wind for a turbine that began operating in January on his Lent Hill Road property, about 2,000 feet from his house. He now calls it a mistake.

Since First Wind's Cohocton wind development went live — and even prior to that, during the construction phase — nearby homeowners have complained about turbine noise. Graham likened the noise from the tower on his property and another on a neighbor's property that's only 1,050 feet away to jet engines.

“It's a constant grinding, whining noise,” he said later. “You walk outside the house and it sounds like planes are in the sky all the time. You wake up at two or three in the morning, and it's impossible to get back to sleep.”

Graham said he and his wife had been anxious about possible noise from the turbines, but that the developer had reassured them their concerns were unfounded.

“We said from day one, we don't want noise,” he recalled. “We were constantly assured that at 900 feet, the noise would only be like the hum of a refrigerator. We believed that.”

Graham was also reassured by neighbors who took bus trips to operating wind farms, and who came back reporting the noise was negligible. But it's not just the noise making Graham unhappy.

First Wind spokesperson John Lamontagne said the company is working with the town on the sound monitoring, and that they have established a sound complaint hotline.

"We understand there are concerns about sound and are working with residents, the town and the turbine manufacturer to ensure we are in compliance with town statutes and determine if there are ways to mitigate the sound," Lamontagne said.

Some of the turbines are turned off for warranty maintenance work to their blades through their manufacturer, Clipper Windpower, which has also been conducting sound testing. Clipper spokesperson Mary Gates reiterated that the turbines are operating per the sound requirements, and said that the company is looking at whether adjustments can be made to further dampen the sound.

For Duserick, who has been hearing concerns about the siting of wind towers in neighboring towns for the past few years he's held office, Graham's story didn't come as a surprise.

"I think it's important to get into the record that people that approved towers on their own property now think it's an error — at least, one did," Duserick said, noting that he also sent an e-mail inviting First Wind to share their side of the story, although he hasn't yet heard back.

Duserick has explained that Naples is not against wind towers, but that the Town Board does want to see them properly sited. He is now looking into whether county officials will help support the town's position in protesting the placement of several towers slated to be put up by developer Ecogen on Knapp Hill, near the Prattsburgh-Naples town line. The nearest tower is within 489 feet of Naples landowner John Servo's property line, and the town has lodged formal protests that this is effectively "reverse zoning," limiting Naples landowners from full use of their property for safety reasons.

Servo also told the board that despite developers' claims that wind farms would not adversely affect property values, a recent appraisal of the 25-acre parcel owned by his wife near the Steuben County line — where Ecogen's turbines are planned — came back with a reduced value.

That value dropped, he said, because the land was deemed too close to the future turbines.

Based on the appraisal, the Naples assessor lowered their assessment by 60 percent. Servo later pointed out that if such a trend continues, the shifting tax base could affect residents in other parts of town.

"If all the property near the turbines gets devalued and the town's budget stays the same, doesn't it seem like everybody else's taxes will go up?" he asked.

While Naples has made attempts to protest plans for the siting of towers in Prattsburgh, so far it has received little response. A letter the town sent to the Public Service Commission in December asking that the agency mandate greater setbacks has gone unanswered, and discussions with the State Attorney General's office haven't yet yielded a commitment for action on the issue.

Many Naples and Prattsburgh residents are hoping that after airing concerns on the siting of proposed Prattsburgh wind towers at Congressman Eric Massa's latest Town Hall meeting held in Naples on May 1, they may have found a champion.

"He promised he would take a look at the issues," said Duserick, noting that more than half of the meeting was spent discussing wind development.

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I and Save Western Ohio (www.savewesternOH.org) applaud and hail Hal Graham. To those who 'aren't against wind energy,' I would ask you to consider the facts regarding its impotence in all three vital areas: technical, environmental and economic.

New York State's own John Droz has published some succinct documents to help you discern planet lover from snake oil salesman. Go to: <http://www.northnet.org/brvmug/WindPower/articles.html>

'Only ALL OF US TOGETHER can fight big media and big corporate interests!'
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Neighbors say wind energy has its price

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August 15, 2010 9:15 am • [CLAY BARBOUR | 608-252-6129 | cbarbour@madison.com](#) (0) Comments



A collection of 400-foot wind turbines tower over farmland in the town of Malone in northern Fond du Lac County. The turbines are part of the 88-turbine Blue Sky Green Field wind farm. (6) More Photos

ST. CLOUD, Wis. — Elizabeth Ebertz loves her garden, but the 67-year-old grandmother doesn't work in it much anymore.

The small vegetable patch, which has produced onions, carrots and tomatoes for many family dinners, sits behind her home, in a little valley, about a half-mile from a dozen 400-foot-tall wind turbines.

The structures are part of the Blue Sky Green Field Wind Energy Center in northeastern Fond du Lac County, one of the state's largest wind farms, capable of producing energy for about 36,000 homes.

Unfortunately, said Ebertz, the turbines also produce enough noise to chase her from the garden — and most nights, disturb her sleep.

"Sometimes it sounds like a racetrack, or a plane landing," she said. "You wouldn't believe how loud it gets."

Science says wind power safe
 Wisconsin should adopt standard rules for smaller wind farms without buying into alarmist fears.
[Read more](#)

The state Public Service Commission is considering a new set of wind farm regulations that could free up the industry and promote growth in Wisconsin, a state that has lagged behind the rest of the Midwest in using wind as an alternative energy source.

The PSC, which regulates state utilities, is expected to send the proposal to the Legislature by the end of the month.

If passed, the measure could go a long way in helping Wisconsin reach its goal of generating 10 percent of its energy with renewable sources by 2015. Renewable sources account for 5 percent of the state's energy now.

The measure could also end what has been years of localized fights — often spurred by well-

What we're saying on Twitter

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Did Leroy Butler do the right thing by not apologizing or retracting his statement on Twitter with regard to the Wisconsin church that canceled his speaking engagement?

- Absolutely! He is a class act all the way!
- Yes. It took guts to turn down \$8,500.
- Hard to say without knowing the church involved.
- No. He should have held up his end of the contract.

funded anti-wind organizations — that have effectively killed at least 10 proposed wind farms in the past eight years, and scared off several others.

But for people like Ebertz, the new rules mean more people will have to deal with wind turbines and the problems that come with them.

“I wish those things were never built here,” Ebertz said. “They’re just too close to people. I wish they were gone.”

State far behind neighbors

Wisconsin spends about \$1.5 billion on imported energy every year and ranks 16th in the country in available wind.

According to the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA), Wisconsin has the capacity to produce up to 449 megawatts of energy from its current wind farms — enough to power about 110,000 homes.

Yet the state trails other Midwestern states in wind energy production. Minnesota wind farms produce 1,797 megawatts, Illinois produces 1,848 and Iowa generates 3,670. “It’s not even close,” said Barnaby Dinges, an AWEA member and lobbyist from Illinois. “Wisconsin is danger of falling out of the wind game altogether. It’s getting a reputation as inhospitable to the wind industry.”

Dinges has lobbied for six wind farms in the past five years, three of them in Wisconsin. He said the state has a number of well-organized anti-wind groups that have endangered its 10 percent goal.

“This isn’t like any grass-roots opposition we have seen elsewhere,” he said. “These aren’t just concerned citizens going to meetings. These are mass mailings, billboards, full-page ads. It’s more professional and it costs a lot of money.”

Jenny Heinzen — a professor of wind energy technology at Lakeshore Technical College, which has campuses in Manitowoc, Cleveland and Sheboygan, and a member of the state’s Wind Siting Council — said she has been amazed with the opposition.

“I have my suspicions that they are getting help from some groups from outside the state, but that has never been confirmed,” she said, referencing persistent rumors of coal and natural gas companies helping to kill wind projects here.

There are a lot of people who live near wind farms and never report problems. Still, the state is home to several anti-wind groups, including the Brown County Citizens for Responsible Wind Energy, the WINDCOWS, the Calumet County Citizens for Responsible Energy, Healthy Wind Wisconsin and the Coalition for Environmental Stewardship.

These groups have some powerful supporters, including several prominent lawyers, lobbyist and former state Sen. Bob Welch and Carl Kuehne, former CEO of American Foods Group.

But officials with the anti-wind groups say most of their members are simply residents who do not like the thought of living near a wind farm.

“We heard that criticism before — that we are a front group for oil and gas companies — but it’s just not true,” said Lynn Korinek, a member of WINDCOWS. “We are a group of about 200 members who hold rummage sales to fund our fight. There are no special interests behind us, believe me.”

Neighbors claim health problems

Most of the state’s anti-wind groups say they have nothing against wind energy, they simply disagree with how it is implemented in the state.

Still, their websites show members either fear the possible side effects of wind energy, or want

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others to fear them. The concerns include diminished property values, occasional noise pollution, moving shadows cast by the giant windmills along with loss of sleep from vibrations, increased menstrual cycles, high blood pressure, headaches and irritability.

Recently, the state Division of Public Health looked into the issue, studying more than 150 medical reports, interviewing dozens of residents and municipalities and consulting the universities of Wisconsin, Maine and Minnesota, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Their conclusion was that scientific evidence does not support the claim of wind turbine syndrome, an umbrella term for the health problems some have attributed to wind farms. The letter also points out that many of the symptoms associated with the condition — headaches, irritability, loss of sleep — are fairly common and can be attributed to other factors.

“They can explain it anyway they want, but something is different around here and it has been ever since they put those turbines up,” said Allen Hass, a 56-year-old farmer who owns about 600 acres in Malone, northeast of Fond du Lac.

Hass has three Blue Sky Green Field turbines on his property. He said We Energies, which owns the wind farm, pays him about \$12,000 a year for the space.

Hass said the money does not make up for his health problems, including headaches and loss of memory.

“I wish I never made that deal,” he said.

Brian Manthey, We Energies spokesman, said the company is aware of Hass’s complaints, but that the scientific evidence does not support them. He said the company works hard to make its neighbors happy.

“You never get 100 percent support for anything, but you will find that a lot of people are happy with the farm,” he said.

New rules trump local ones

The new rules, written by the Wind Siting Council, streamline the state approval process so potential developers know exactly what they face when considering a project in Wisconsin.

Probably the most important aspect of the new regulations deals with state permitting. In the past, the state only had direct authority over wind farms generating more than 100 megawatts.

Under the new rules, the state would deal with all wind farms. Local municipalities would still be involved but would not be allowed to establish regulations stricter than the state’s.

Supporters figure this will open the door for the rapid growth of wind energy in the state by bypassing many of the local fights that have created such a logjam. Wisconsin is home to nine wind farms, with another two under construction, and three in the planning stages.

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Wind turbine noise concerns prompt investigation

by [Dan Gunderson](#), Minnesota Public Radio

August 4, 2009

AUDIO

[Wind turbine noise concerns prompt investigation](#) (feature audio)

Valley City, ND — Wind farms are rapidly expanding across the Midwest, and a growing number of residents who live near the wind turbines are complaining about noise.

In Minnesota, those complaints prompted the Public Utilities Commission to investigate.

When Dennis and Cathryn Stillings chose a place to retire, they were looking for solitude and quiet. So a couple of years ago, they bought a farmstead in the rolling hills of eastern North Dakota.

Soon after they moved in, dozens of wind turbines sprouted in a neighbor's nearby field.

Dennis Stillings said he wasn't bothered at first because he supported wind energy and he was told the turbines were quiet, no louder than 55 decibels.

"Which is about the same level as your refrigerator running, or the same level as my conversation right now," Stillings said. "Well, if I was holding a conversation with someone in my living room and someone in the corner was sitting there going bop, bop, bop at 55 decibels, it would drive me nuts and I'd kick him out."



Wind turbines

The Stillings said what bothers them is the pulsating, low-frequency sound. They say it's like a giant dishwasher, or a helicopter in the distance. Cathryn Stillings said there's no escaping the sound and that she's having trouble sleeping.

"It's a duller sound in the house but it's still out there," she said. "You can hear it through the walls. It just kind of gets in your bones."

The Stillings' complaints are similar to cases popping up around the country in the past couple of years, as wind farm expansion moves closer to populated areas. Complaints include headaches, dizziness and trouble sleeping.

In Minnesota, a handful of groups have organized to demand tougher regulation. They want the state to require more distance between wind turbines and homes. A report by the [Minnesota Department of Health](#) concluded there are potential health concerns.

The Minnesota Department of Health issued a white paper earlier this year which reviewed available research and concluded noise might be underestimated when planning wind farms and that better evaluation of low frequency sounds is needed. MDH also concluded cumulative sound from multiple turbines should be considered.

The Public Utilities Commission is considering changing the rules for wind turbines.

Bob Cupit, a permit manager with the Public Utilities Commission, said concerns about turbine noise are increasingly coming up in public comments about wind projects.



Wind turbines

"We thought we needed an answer to the questions and if we didn't have a science-based answer, then we get uncomfortable about that," Cupit said.

Minnesota now requires wind turbines to meet a 50 decibel sound limit. That means most turbines are sited 1,000 feet or more from homes.

Some contend the minimum setback should be increased to about 2,000 feet or more. The National Research Council of the National Academies found there are few noise complaints beyond a half mile from a wind turbine.

Cupit said the PUC will take public comment and expect the wind industry to fund additional research.

"We're going to see what we get and we're going to rely on the industry to be responsive," he said. "Then we're going to put the facts on the table and see if we have enough to adequately shape an adjustment to setbacks that are appropriate and in the public interest."

Changing those setbacks could make placing wind farms more complicated and more expensive.

Leon Steinberg is CEO of Minneapolis-based National Wind. He said most wind farm developers already use setbacks that exceed state regulations.

"I don't think the industry believes it's a significant problem," Steinberg said. "But I believe the industry is concerned with the perception that it may be a problem."

Steinberg said a negative public perception could stall wind projects in the future, or make wind energy development more expensive, so he supports the state review of regulations.

"I can tell you that as far as I'm aware we have never had a complaint on one of our wind farms," Steinberg said. "But as you start developing in more urban areas or

areas that have hobby farms and higher population densities, I think a higher level of scrutiny is needed."

Steinberg said he is confident research will prove there are no negative health effects from wind farms.

Wind developers are moving closer to populated areas because that's where transmission lines are located. Many isolated rural areas don't have enough transmission capacity to carry the electricity generated by wind farms back to urban areas where it's needed.

That's happening in Clay County where plans to erect hundreds of wind turbines are on the drawing board. The county recently passed an ordinance to control small wind developments of less than 5 MW, but the state still regulates larger wind developments.

Clay County Planner Tim Magnusson said most of the wind development is planned in the fastest growing area of the county. People are building homes because of hills, trees and wildlife. Magnusson hopes the state will establish standards that eliminate any dispute about health effects.

"It would be nice if the state agencies got together and used that white paper as a stepping off point to do some of that research to ensure that what's going to be a big business in the future is a safe business in the future," Magnusson said.

The proposed wind farms in Clay County prompted some area residents to ask for a review of state regulations.

Moorhead resident Per Anderson is one of the Minnesotans who asked the PUC to evaluate wind turbine setbacks.

Anderson said he supports wind energy; in fact he pays extra on his electric bill each month to support the city of Moorhead wind energy program. He owns land near a proposed wind farm and says any health issues are very important to the small number of people who experience them.

"Do they matter? They do, and we have to find a way to protect their interests because the stories they tell about the disruption of their lives strike me as very significant and indefensible," Anderson said. "But they are very small numbers against an overwhelming demand to create a very robust renewable energy system for this country."

Anderson said he's pleased the public has a chance to weigh in on turbine noise. He said he'll accept whatever the utilities commission decides after a complete analysis.

The Public Utilities Commission will take comment through mid September.

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