

Wind Energy is a lot of Hot Air

The Sunday, May 18th Valley Morning Star article written by Thomas D. Segel was perhaps the most one-sided “news” story I have read in a very long time. Mr. Segel’s uninformed pro-wind missive was rife with misstatements. Right off the bat Mr. Segel falsely asserts, “wind turbines require no coal, gas or oil has no waste products and creates no greenhouse gases ...”. Well, where do I start? This is much like the old ethanol fairy-tale. The amount of energy expended to manufacture the blades and towers alone negate this argument. Also, turbines use quite a bit of oil and other lubricants to keep ‘em spinning. When you add to this all the maintenance vehicles used to service each of the 400 or so turbines you do indeed “use” a lot of oil and gas. It should be mentioned that since less than 1% of American electricity is dependant on imported oil, this claim is moot. Cars are by far the biggest users of imported oil not power plants.

Wind energy supporters always fail to mention the obvious. The fatal flaw with wind turbines is that when the wind does not blow turbines do not generate electricity. Since there is no way to store the electricity produced by turbines, conventional power plants must continue to be used as back-ups. This on again off again nature of turbine plants oddly enough increases rather than decreases greenhouse emissions.

Once again, Mr. Segel is being clever by saying turbines need only a 42 foot by 42 foot space. His statement is calculated to obfuscate the truth and nothing more. Wind plants are huge destroyers of land. Even though each wind turbine has a rather small footprint the overall footprint of a wind farm is immense. A 1,900 megawatt nuclear plant requires about 500 acres whereas a 1,900 megawatt wind plant needs about 150,000 acres. A wind plant is much more than just turbines. The roads they require are extra high and wide in order to accommodate the large trucks that bring in the huge towers and blades. In addition to this, you have primary and secondary transmission lines that need extensive service roads. You also have control buildings, parking lots as well as other support buildings. Wind plants create a labyrinth of destruction.

The real shame of Mr. Segel’s article is it fails to even mention the grave threat posed to private property rights. Some think the Kenedy Ranch should be able to do what ever they want within their own fences. If only it was so simple. The fact is Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson has stated publicly that he would like to see these wind plants all along the beautiful Texas Coast. This means that if the Kenedy wind plant is built it will be the first in a series. The Kenedy Ranch is unique because not only is the proposed wind plant to be built on their property but the power grid also happens to reside within the Kenedy Ranch as well. This will not be the case if wind plants are built at other Texas Coastal locations. In other locations many private ranches, as well as smaller parcels, will inevitably, be between the grid and the wind farms. When this happens large pieces of public property (The Laguna Madre for instance) as well as smaller pieces will be seized through eminent domain proceedings for private commercial enterprises. Chicken Little you say?

On April 22, 2008, the Town Board of Prattburgh in Steuben County, N.Y., resolved to authorize the commencement of condemnation proceedings against eight specific landowners and against "any other property" along several named roads to secure easements for transmission lines needed by a commercial wind power project being developed by "First Wind" (formerly "UPC"). This will happen all along the last unspoiled section of the beautiful Texas Coast if the Coastal Habitat Alliance is unsuccessful in its attempt to get the wind plants to play by the same rules as other Texas industries.

I realize wind energy seems like the "silver bullet" to cure all that ails us energy-wise but I urge all citizens to give this heavily subsidized industry a closer look before giving them the keys to the city like we did with ethanol purveyors. Ethanol has increased the price of food and wind plants will increase the cost of power. The loss of private property alone should give us pause. In South Texas we just don't have enough brush left to embark on such a shaky proposition as unnecessary, costly coastal wind plants.

If you would like more information contact the Lower Laguna Madre Foundation at llmf@grandriver.net. The LLMF is proud to be a founding member of the Coastal Habitat Alliance.

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