

GREENBRIER COUNTY GROUP OPPOSES WINDFARM

By David Buhrman

We like to say “Give people energy and they will use it. Teach people about energy and they will use it wisely.” Mountain Communities for Responsible Energy is an all volunteer group of Greenbrier County citizens who simply want their neighbors to know that giant wind turbines installed on miles and miles of West Virginia’s ridgelines will seriously impact the heritage views that have made our state a major tourist destination. Building them will demand new permanent roadways capable of handling 100-ton loads, trucks transporting turbine blades 135 feet long, thousands of yards of concrete for foundations, etc. Documented construction of a ridgeline facility is at: <http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~hills/cc/gallery/index.htm#photos> One look at this website and you will never again think wind turbine construction on ridgelines is good for the environment.

Beech Ridge Developers say one benefit of the wind factory will be conservation of oil. That is blatantly misleading because only 3% of all US oil consumption makes electricity. Five-sixths of that usage is tarry residual oil or coal-like petroleum coke—both otherwise almost useless byproducts of refining. So, only 0.4% of US oil is distilled products made into electricity.

The majority of electricity generation in this country comes from burning coal.

Requiring scrubbers and precipitators on dirty power plants could be the most cost-effective and environmentally beneficial strategy to reduce air pollution in our area. The Mt. Storm plant now serves as a national model for how affordable technology can bring about dramatic improvements in air quality. From 1995 to 2003 the cumulative annual emission levels of NO_x, SO_x, and even CO₂ actually declined from power plants operating within the Mid-Atlantic Region despite an increase in their combined electricity generation of about 15% over this period.

Look up the Canadian study done for Prince Edward County at: http://www.aandc.org/research/wind_pec_present.html. The study notes the British Dept. of Trade estimates a modern wind turbine saves about 0.078 tons of CO₂ emissions/hour. However, a single 18 wheel truck traveling at 60mph produces 0.08 tons CO₂ emissions per hour! Given the uncontrolled growth of road traffic, the erecting of turbines may be seen as a futile exercise. How many turbines would we have to build each year merely to keep pace with traffic growth? Are CO₂ emissions from transportation a problem? Absolutely, but don’t be fooled into thinking wind turbines will have much effect whatsoever in addressing this problem.

The Beech Ridge Developers say the existing Mountaineer Project in Tucker Co. hasn’t destroyed anyone’s life. Look in the March 3rd, 2005 issue of the Pendleton Co. Times and you can read the story of one resident who says their entire quality of life has indeed been destroyed. Unobstructed ridgelines sloping down to picturesque valleys have been the selling point for tourists and second home builders in Greenbrier County for a long time. Documented studies from Scotland reveal that tourism and property values are significantly harmed when 400’ foot tall industrial wind turbines are built: <http://www.viewsofscotland.org/library/tourism.php> In news from Highland County, Virginia

where a much smaller wind turbine facility has been proposed, Brian Richardson reported that real estate transactions for a recent five-month period dropped by over 50% from the same five months a year earlier. This strongly supports anecdotal reports from realtors and others that interest in buying property or building there has fallen off substantially. <http://johnrsweet.com/Personal/Wind/index.html> Beech Ridge Developers would have you believe the turbines will be built in an area too degraded to have ecological value. While it's true that numerous mining spoils and clear cuts exist in the region, they primarily occur adjacent to the ridge tops where turbines will be constructed. Aerial photos actually show a very large percentage of the area where they are likely to put turbines has relatively mature forest and has not been heavily cut over. The destruction of hundreds of acres of forest habitat, as well as the fifteen miles of clear cut ridge tops and extra wide roads necessary for this project, has the hunting community very concerned.

If built, Beech Ridge developers will recover \$200 million of their \$300 million dollar investment thru tax breaks. Our state, that already exports 70% of its electricity will have lost some of the "wild and wonderful" flavor it has so successfully been marketing to tourists. And for what? Peak electricity demands occur on hot still summer days when the wind doesn't blow. "Mountaineer" facility in Tucker County averages only 10% efficiency during the month of August. Industrializing Greenbrier County's ridge tops for inefficient and environmentally degrading wind power projects defies logic.

All of this is a financial boon for developers and a boondoggle for you due to higher tax and electric bills for an energy source that is about as effective in fighting global warming as a garden hose would be in dousing a 10,000 acre forest fire! It's time to tell the truth. There is no silver bullet for halting global warming. The two primary causes of greenhouse gasses, coal for electricity and oil/gas for transportation, are and will be a part of our lives for the foreseeable future. We should be focusing on how to make them both cleaner. Don't simply accept what the wind developers say because it's what you want to hear. Demand that they support their statements with real world facts. The integrity of our environment is not only a source of pride; it is also critical to our economic well being. It makes no sense to sacrifice who we are and what we have.

Visit: www.wvmcre.org to stay informed on opposition to the Beech Ridge Wind Project in Greenbrier County.