

# ANOTHER STATE DEALS WITH WINDMILL SITING

## Submitted by Linda Cooper

West Virginia is not the only state which has faced controversy about construction of wind turbines. After wind turbines went online in Kewaunee County, Wisconsin, the Lincoln Township Board of Supervisors approved a moratorium on new turbine construction. The purpose of the moratorium was to delay new construction of wind turbines for eighteen months, giving the township the opportunity to assess the impacts of the 22 turbines installed by Wisconsin Public Service Corporation (WPSC) and Madison Gas and Electric (MG&E), which went online in June, 1999.

In studying the issue, the Moratorium Committee did a survey of area residents as well as holding public hearings in which residents could present their comments. The survey form also contained spaces for people to write in their comments. Here are some of the results:

**Survey Question:** Are any of the following wind turbine issues currently causing problems in your household?

### **a. *Shadows from the blades***

Residents living within 800 ft to ¼ mile 33% yes Residents living within ¼ - ½ mile 41% yes Here are additional write-in comments from the survey:

- “We get a ‘strobe effect’ throughout our house and over our entire property (40 acres).”
- “Shadows are cast over the ground and affect my balance.”
- “We installed vertical blinds but still have some problems.”
- “They catch my eye and I look at them instead of the road. They are dangerous.”
- “Strobe light, headaches, sick to the stomach, can’t shut (sic) everything up enough to stop the strobe coming into the house.”

### **b. *TV reception***

Residents living within 800 ft to ¼ mile 33% yes Residents living within ¼ - ½ mile 37% yes Additional write-in comments from survey:

- “Ever since they went up our reception is bad.”
- “At times you can see shadowing on the TV that imitates the blades’ moves, also poor reception.”
- “Minimum of 50’ antenna tower proposed but no guarantee that would be high enough. Such a tower is unacceptable.”
- “At times we get black and white TV. Two channels come in hazy!!”

### **c. *Blinking lights from on top of the towers***

Residents living within 800 ft \* ¼ mile 9% yes Residents living within ¼ - ½ mile 15% yes Additional write-in comments from survey:

- “Blinking red lights disrupt the night sky. They make it seem like we’re living in a city or near a factory.”
- “At night it is very irritating because they flash in the windows.”
- “We have to keep drapes closed at night.”
- “Looks like a circus, live in the country for peace and quiet.”

#### **d. Noise**

Residents living within 800 ft to ¼ mile 44% yes Residents living within ¼ - ½ mile 52% yes Additional write-in comments from survey:

- “Sounds like a gravel pit crushing rock nearby.”
- “Sometimes so loud it makes it seem like we live in an industrial park. The noise dominates the ‘sound scape.’ It’s very unsettling/disturbing especially since it had been so peaceful here. It is an ongoing source of irritation. Can be heard throughout our house even with all the windows and doors closed.”

It makes an uneven pitch not like the white noise of a fan. Can be heard through closed windows making it hard to fall asleep anytime of the year.”

- “The noise can make it impossible to fall asleep.”
- “You can hear them at times as far as two miles away.”
- “It is the annoyance of never having a quiet evening outdoors. When the blades occasionally stop its (sic) like pressure being removed from my ears. You actually hear the quiet, which is a relief.”

#### **e. Other problems**

Additional write-in comments from survey:

- “. . . bring lighting (sic) strikes closer to our home.”
- “More concern over seeing more lightening (sic) than in the past—before generators were erected.”
- “People driving and stopping.”
- “While they were being installed the destroying of the roads, noise, and extra traffic have been negative.”
- “More traffic and have to back out of driveways (live on hill, hard to see).”
- “More traffic. I used to feel safe walking or riding bike (sic).”

**Question:** In the last year, have you been awakened by sound coming from the wind turbines?

Residents living within 800 ft to ¼ mile 67% yes Residents living within ¼ - ½ mile 35% yes Additional write-in comments from survey:

- “Enough to go to the doctor because I need sleeping pills. Sometimes it absolutely drives you ‘nuts.’ “
- “I wake up with headaches every morning because of noise. Causes my (sic) to have very restless sleep at night!”“We have no way of knowing long-term affects (sic). Growing concerns with stray voltage and its affect (sic) on health. We’ve had frequent headaches, which we didn’t have before. Especially in the morning, after sleeping at night.

We need answers!”

- “Not awakened but found it hard to fall asleep!!!”

**Question:** How close to the wind turbines would you consider buying or building a home?

The results for all survey respondents in the study, including those living over 2 miles away are as follows:

- 61% would not build or buy within ½ mile of turbines
- 41% would have to be 2 or more miles away from turbines in order for them to build or buy
- 74% would not build or buy within ¼ mile of turbines Additional write-in comments from surveys: “Ugly, would not buy in this area again.”
- “25+ miles. They can be seen from this distance.”
- “Would never consider it. Plan on moving if we can sell our house.”
- “No where near them never ever!! Not for a million dollars.”

A sampling of some of the overall write-in comments from the survey is as follows:

- “I live approximately 1 ½ miles from the windmills.

On a quiet night with the right wind direction, I can hear the windmill noise. People living within a ¼ mile should probably be compensated for the noise and the nuisance.”

- “The noise, flashing lights, interrupted TV reception, strobe effect and possible effect of stray voltage has created a level of stress and anxiety in our lives that was not present before the turbines’ installation. From the beginning there has been a lack of honesty and responsibility.”
- “Let other counties or communities be the guinea pigs with the long-term effects or disadvantages of having the windmills. All the landowners who put the windmills up have them on property away from their own homes but on the fence lines and land near all other homeowners.”
- “Our whole family has been affected. My husband just went to the doctor because of his stomach. He hates them. We have fights all the time about them. It’s terrible. Why did you put them so close to our new home and expect us to live a normal life. If it isn’t the shadows it’s the damn noise. The only people that think they are so great and wonderful are those who really don’t know.”
- “When we were dating back in the 1970’s we always said that someday we were going to build a home here. It was great and then you guys did this . . . This should have never happened. If only you would have taken the time and study this more. Everyone was thinking about themselves and money. No one cared about anything else.”

In its public hearings, the Moratorium Committee also heard concern about depressed property values, stray voltage, damage to livestock (including decline in milk production and increased disease), and damage to well water.

***Editor’s Note: This is an excerpt from a longer report of the Moratorium Committee. To see a more extensive summary, go to [www.aweo.org/windlincoln.html](http://www.aweo.org/windlincoln.html) and <http://www.hcwind.com/>***

**survey1.html. Since the West Virginia Highlands**

*Conservancy did not participate in the study of the Moratorium Committee and has no way of verifying its findings, they do not represent a formal position of the Conservancy. It is presented here because we assume that the report was honestly done and may provide some useful insight as West Virginia develops its policy toward industrial wind power generation.*