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Editor, The Times

I was disappointed to read in last week's paper that Dan Taylor, based on his personal experience with small-scale wind power, would voice support for industrial-sized wind turbines as a progressive, beneficial development for Pendleton County residents. He is wrong in so many ways.

Most obvious is the error in failing to differentiate his office windmill from the behemoths proposed for Jack Mountain. His tower is 120' high with small, inconspicuous rotor blades. It's unnecessarily tall for my tastes but unfortunately we don't have a height limitation ordinance, as do our more enlightened neighbors in Highland County. However, I find it tolerable and not anywhere near as obtrusive as a tower with a 410 foot hub height and rotor blades 107 feet long, which makes the whole thing only 38 feet shorter than the Washington Monument. And that is just what Liberty Gap wants 50 of on Jack Mountain.

Dan's setup, but on a shorter tower, is actually what I would prefer to see throughout the county. It requires no transmission lines, no condemnation of property, no million-dollar upgrades to the North Franklin Substation, and no subsidies provided by the taxpayers. Individual homeowners through net metering could save money when the wind blows and pay Allegheny Power when it doesn't, just as Dan Taylor now does.

Dan also errs in thinking that these big turbines are clean and green energy producers. He mentioned the Netherlands as a country that has come to an accommodation with these things. As one of the early adopters of this technology the Dutch are now discovering its limitations. Their Parliament is preparing to end government subsidies and already prohibits construction of any new land-based wind turbines.

Why the change in attitude? Because these machines produce power erratically, are unreliable and have destabilized the power grid to the point that conventional power plants must have stand-by capacity equal to the theoretical production capacity of the wind turbines to compensate for wind power's inadequacies.

Denmark, another early adopter, has more wind turbines per capita than any other country and the story is the same there. No more turbines are being erected, subsidies have ended and the Danish company Vestas, the world's largest manufacturer of industrial wind turbines, has set up shop in California and Wisconsin to take advantage of a gullible public present in the US. Gullible, I might add, because only one side of the story has been thus far presented.

The American Wind Energy Association, once the province of advocates and experimenters in off-grid home-scaled wind power, has been hijacked and bankrolled to become a mouthpiece for the big players, all desperate to stay in business by finding new suckers for their machines. Politicians and legislators like these companies, too, especially the campaign contributions they provide. It also gives the politicians an illusory fig leaf that they're doing something about greenhouse gases while ignoring the biggest source: automobile tailpipes.

Dan Taylor is also wrong in his projections of the economic benefits to Pendleton County. He ignores the loss of property values and instead imagines ridge upon ridge of giant wind turbines turning Pendleton County into a countywide “wind park” with turbine viewshed disturbance taxes uplifting the indigenous groups inhabiting the park. I am not interested in being paid for having to look at eyesores, and I doubt many other Pendletonians would be interested either.

Also, Dan’s comment that this would be an “easy to do” moneymaker fails to take into account that it’s the state that determines what county assessors can tax. They don’t have the authority to specialty-tax as he puts it, “property that breaks the visual line.”

I do agree with him on one point, though, which is that more could be done to promote all the recreational opportunities available in the county. However, I don’t think these projects, such as Liberty Gap, are all that compatible with preserving the high quality level of those very recreational activities he and I both value.

Wind power does have a place in the energy picture, but it’s place is home-based, net-metering windmills, not invasive, gigantic, infrastructure-intensive, industrial wind plants.

Arthur Hooton