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Mr. Hicks:

Like many Highland County landowners, I pay membership dues and insurance premiums to the Farm Bureau, and thus I receive the monthly Farm Bureau News. The current issue has an article that puts a very misleading spin on wind power and the Highland New Wind Development project in particular.

The article is based on an interview with Jonathan Miles and Mark Lotts of the Virginia Wind Energy Collaborative (VWEC). The article essentially ignores the negative effects of placing 400-foot turbines on our forested ridges, and it does not acknowledge the opposition to the proposed Highland project.

Lotts is quoted stating that the Mountaineer project in West Virginia has been "very successful." He does not mention that 1000's of bats (up to 4000) were killed there during the first year of operation. He does not mention that 33 migrating birds were killed there in a single night when they flew into turbine blades. And he does not mention that the huge corporation which owns the project no longer allows access to the site for mortality and mitigation studies.

Miles states that he doesn't have a problem with environmental studies --as long, it seems, as such studies don't stop projects.

Miles further implies that all is well because VWEC has created a computerized map and landscape classification system to assist with identifying appropriate sites for wind projects. He fails to mention that VWEC's landscape classification system is a corrupted version of the original from which all reference to the need for environmental assessment has been removed (see www.vawind.org). And, of course, he does not mention that under the original landscape classification system, the Highland New Wind Development site is unsuitable for wind development --given that it provides habitat for endangered species and because it is a significant bird and bat concentration area.

The Farm Bureau has allowed itself to be used in a campaign to prevent meaningful assessment of commercial-scale wind energy development in Virginia. If the Farm Bureau truly seeks to represent the interests and concerns of its membership, it needs to publish another article that fairly presents all sides of this issue.

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