

TIME TO BAN WINDMILLS IN LAKE ERIE

In last month's Part 1 of this examination of wind farms in Lake Erie by the Lake Erie Energy Development Corporation, we examined the "Blight on the Lake" this proposal will create.

We also identified the organizations behind it, the planned sell-out to foreign interests and the taxpayer money needed to keep LEEDCo and its leaders afloat.

In this Part2, we'll look at other aspects of this project that all those who love Lake Erie should be opposing, and how to have your voice heard.

The idea that we can generate electricity from the wind is not, in itself, bad. But, the proposal to build wind turbines in Lake Erie should top a list of bad ideas. It's time for all those who see this boondoggle for what it is to take action.

Specifically, a wind farm, dubbed "Ice Breaker," would be built in Lake Erie about 7 miles off Cleveland. If constructed, it would be the nation's first offshore turbine development in fresh water, slated to be operating by 2018. But a serious look at the project should lead all those who value Lake Erie -- shoreline communities, boaters, fishermen and more -- to say "No!"

The group behind it, perhaps, should be more accurately called the Lake Erie Environmental Destruction Corporation. They have lived off taxpayer money for more than a decade and just got a truly fat Department of Energy grant of \$47 million in taxpayer money. Unfortunately, this money will move LEEDCo closer to realizing its stated goal of inspiring more wind farm developments in Lake, Ashtabula, Lorain and Erie counties. Watch out Lake Erie Islands – the beauty surrounding Perry's Monument could be dwarfed by 410-foot tall, loud sounding, industrial-sized pinwheels!

Bad Economics

But forget about destroying the spectacular vista of Lake Erie in the name of some megawatts that we already get from other sources. Look at the economic and environmental aspects.

We have, for example, the world's largest supply of low-cost natural gas currently used to generate increasing amounts of our electricity at reasonable costs. In contrast, electric prices are significantly higher in countries that have embraced wind power, like Britain or Germany where households pay three times more than we pay.

The simple truth is the wind industry can't compete with America's natural gas, a reliable, clean and cheap power source that doesn't need taxpayer subsidies. Wind is unreliable and, therefore, much more costly. In California, for example, capacity factors for the onshore windmill units have been 20 percent to 45 percent lower than normal because average wind speeds dropped.

The Avian Slaughter

The wind industry also promotes itself as environmentally friendly. But, there's the inevitable avian slaughter when whirling turbine blades kill more than a 500,000 birds each year. It's data the industry doesn't want known.

A study of one northern California wind farm found it kills about 60 eagles and 2500 other raptors annually. Last August a federal judge in California ruled in favor of protecting the bald eagle under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Elsewhere, North Carolina-based Duke Energy paid a \$1 million fine and pleaded guilty to killing 14 eagles and 149 other birds at its Wyoming wind farm.

It's particularly telling, however, that the existing Blue Creek Wind Farm in northwest Ohio has filed a lawsuit against the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the Ohio Power Siting Board asking the court to block those agencies from releasing bird kill reports. The wind farm operators don't want birding groups or others to get such information.

In Michigan, wind farm developers see Lake St. Clair as a target for 160 wind turbines, according to State Rep. Timothy Bledsoe. He said the 40-story turbines would be clustered together in groups of 50-plus just three to four miles off the shoreline.

Meanwhile, New York State and the province of Ontario smartly placed moratoriums on offshore windmill construction after residents rejected their unsightly views, expected property value losses and higher electricity costs. Elsewhere, wind energy zoning aimed at restricting turbine locations was enacted in 2015 in Michigan's Huron County.

A Call to Action

Finally, the idea of towers spinning all over Lake Erie, Lake St. Clair and other Great Lakes should trigger a loud denunciation from boaters and anglers. If the destruction of the lakes' beauty isn't enough, consider this:

There will be a need for "No Boating" security zones to protect the wind farms just like the existing zones around power plants. But these new bans on boating will encompass dramatically larger areas, thus eliminating many square miles for recreation.

The time has arrived for boaters, anglers and every person who treasures the unbroken beauty of Lake Erie to stand up and say "NO" to this needless environmental destruction. And, it can be prevented.

Locating turbines in our waterways requires approval from federal agencies including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Federal Aviation Administration.

Most important, however, is that approval must be obtained from various agencies in each impacted state. Such approval hasn't happened, yet. In Ohio, for example, key approval must come from the Ohio Power Siting Board. The Board needs to hear from boaters and anglers objecting to destroying Lake Erie by sticking industrial turbine complexes into recreational areas!

Want to save Lake Erie? Make your voice heard by sending a simple email to OPSB asking them to: “Please Save Our Lake Erie. DO NOT permit wind turbines.” You can easily comment online at: <https://www.opsb.ohio.gov/Contact-Us/> Be sure to reference “Icebreaker Proposal, Case number: 16-1871-EL-BGN”

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