

Wind power plans all wrong for this area

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By BARRY K. MILLER

Wind power companies are courting the Olean area and nearby Western New York. It sounds good, but the way it's planned, it's all wrong. As proposed, their wind power plants would create an unsightly and noisy blight on our town, seriously diminishing our quality of life as well as our property values.

The town of Allegany is currently considering a proposal by a company called EverPower that wants to put 450-foot high wind turbines, with thick rotating diameters of 350 feet, on 5,000 acres atop Rock City. If the company gets approval you will see as many as fifty enormous, spinning turbines grotesquely emblazoned onto our beautiful southern skyline clearly visible from downtown Olean and beyond.

You might think the proposed wind power plants are like the (relatively) small windmills discussed in "Wind power is stymied by zoning rules in some U.S. communities," an AP article published in last Saturday's Olean Times Herald.

The article featured a Texas homeowner's difficulty getting approval for a 33-foot high windmill in his back yard. Wal-Mart's "green store" nearby was discussed because its entrance has a 120-foot high wind turbine. People are having a hard time getting approval for these structures, according to the article, primarily because of "visual blight" and noise.

It would be nice to have responsibly situated wind power for homes and communities. The EverPower and Noble projects would provide no power to their host communities.

More importantly, large-scale wind turbines create immense, constant noise, and need to be situated at least 1 mile (as done in Europe) from the nearest dwelling. Even at 1,000 feet away, they generate twice the noise recommended in published health standards to preserve people's ability to sleep undisturbed in a rural community. Measured noise at completed wind parks is even higher. Yet these wind parks would indeed be situat-

ed 1,000 feet from dwellings.

"Visual blight" may be subjective, but reports from communities with large wind plants indicate home buyers avoid locations where turbines

are visible — certainly when nearby, but also a few miles away when they are sited on ridge tops and affect views.

That's when subjective perception has an objective effect on property values.

The spinning of the turbines makes them even more unsightly. Imagine trying to watch a beautiful sunset with one of these dominating the landscape.

Noble Environmental Power has already obtained approval for 67 turbines (similar to the ones proposed for Rock City) in the town of Eagle in Wyoming County. The

towns of Centerville and Farmersville have approved wind power laws to accommodate expansion of Noble's wind plant into those towns. This power plant would involve about 200 turbines, with their installations requiring road building and clearing of tens of thou-

sands of acres. Commercial wind parks are also proposed in Limestone and Carrolton.

Town officials who want to find out about wind power should book a room at the Flat Rock Inn in Tug Hill, in the midst of New York's largest wind plant, which has more than 150, 400-foot-high turbines. If they like the look during the day and the sound at night, they should come back and tell their constituents that the current proposal for wind power is just perfect.

We, however, disagree. Yes, wind power is a wonderful solution to our energy problems but, like many good things, it can become a bad thing when used irresponsibly. Wind power plants must be carefully and responsibly sited and operated. The proposal as it stands is unsatisfactory and would seriously harm our community.

(Barry K. Miller is a licensed mechanical engineer. He worked as the manager of a wind farm for nine years. He is also president of Concerned Citizens of Cattaraugus County, an organization dedicated to protecting the environment.)

READERS' TURN TO WRITE

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