

Wind turbines won't help Highland

LETTERS

This letter is written to clarify the Aug. 8 editorial titled "Against the wind." It is not currently known whether the Highland New Wind Development will help the economy of Highland County, and, in fact, evidence suggests the contrary. Highland County's economy is strongly supported by tourism based on the scenic and natural resources of this rural area. This area is zoned for agricultural and conservation use, totally incompatible with an industrial complex. There are year-round and seasonal residents on Allegheny Mountain who enjoy the quiet beauty of the mountains. To say that the project area is unpopulated disregards those who live here and cherish our home. We operate a successful ecotourism business on Allegheny Mountain (part of the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail) that would be potentially destroyed by the wind project.

Equally important, there are NO documented economic benefits to the county: no tax dollar relief and few permanent local jobs. Existing projects used very specialized construction crews, imported from other states and/or countries. Michael Siegel of Public and Environmental Finance Associates, Washington, D.C., has performed an economic analysis of this project. "Based on the foregoing studies, large, utility-scale wind farms appear to have little to no significant economic impact on small, rural host counties. Employment in the utility sector which might be expected to show an increase once a large project becomes operational shows little or no discernible change." ... "I am certain that the County's environmental attributes and physical characteristics are probably the two most important explanations for its well-being. It is difficult to understand why one would want to consider trading it for a handful of declining tax dollars from wind "farms" that would create havoc with the County's existing taxpayers, landowners, businesses and economy that depend so heavily on the very attributes that are placed at risk by such projects."

Frankly I am offended that the NIMBY cliché was so casually attributed to citizens with serious and legitimate concerns about an industry that could potentially destroy their businesses and lifestyle. The citizens that I know want to determine our county's best interest in an informed and responsible manner. In my book, that is what it means to be a good citizen.

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