

Wind Energy

Wind energy doesn't work well because, despite the industrial size of its plant, it is so inefficient. The wind doesn't blow with sufficient regularity and intensity to capture enough energy to make much of a difference relative to the size and rate of our demand for electricity. Imagine a thousand hamsters working out on their circular treadmills. They will also produce electricity — but what's the point! The industry tries to compensate for these problems by making its turbines larger and placing them on high ridges with good wind, but their operation still generally requires back-up from fossil-fueled plants. Even if we placed huge wind turbines at all the good wind sites possible, saturating our Mid-Atlantic region with 35,000 windscrapers, this would still not reduce the mining or burning of coal, given our rate of demand for electricity. Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and New Jersey combined have less than one-half of one percent of the nation's wind potential. Consequently, we will not see a reduction in air pollution unless coal plants get serious about using cleaner, more efficient equipment. In the larger scheme of national energy policy, wind power represents a sideshow technology. Here in the East, its façade is electricity production. But its real function is a lucrative income tax shelter for large corporations and wealthy investors. And everyone who has studied the issue knows it.

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