

John R. Sweet

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Subject: Letter to the Editor

Editor, The Recorder

In last week's Recorder, Alden Hathaway writes about global warming and its effects on Highland's maple industry. Most of the central part of his letter is based on the latest science on global warming but the opening and closing sentences make a breathtaking leap to the absurd.

His thesis is that we must accept the proposed wind plant or "surrender to global climate change and lose the last maple forests in Virginia." This outlandish notion has been bandied about so often that some folks might start to believe it. Don't!

A 39 MW wind plant, as has been proposed, generates such a minuscule amount of electricity that it would have an imperceptible effect on the total amount of greenhouse gases emitted in the region, let alone the world.

Installing a small wind plant to reduce greenhouse emissions has been aptly likened to removing a drop of water from a bathtub that is being filled from the faucet. Yes, there is less water in the tub but so infinitesimally less that no one will notice.

Reduction of greenhouse gases is one of the misleading claims that wind advocates make in defense of their gargantuan contraptions. The HNWD plant, if built, would generate less than 1% of the electricity generated by the Mount Storm coal-fired plant. Even if every suitably windy ridgetop in the county was developed, a total of 800 to 1000 turbines, it would equal about 25% of Mount Storm. And this does not mean that Mount Storm's emissions would be reduced by 25% since it would have to be kept running to supply electricity when there is not enough wind.

Global warming is a serious issue, worthy of serious countermeasures, but to use it as a justification for wind energy in Appalachia is a scam and a diversion. We need strong conservation measures, large increases in solar electric generation, new anti-pollution technology for power plants, and new laws with real teeth to curb coal mining abuses. These types of measures will have real, long-term impacts on global warming and the environment, unlike trying to empty the bathtub with an eyedropper.

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