

## WINTERBOURNE WIND

Dear Approvals,

I submit a range of questions for the proponents which the enclosed New York Times article raised about the community push back against Wind Complexes.

I recommend REJECTION.

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RE: WINTERBOURNE WIND

**Subject:** US WIND INDUSTRIAL COMPLEXES PUSH BACK

Will the proponents please comment on the objections raised in the following New York Times article, especially answering points 1 to 26.

1 depressed property values

2 flickering shadows

3 falling ice

4 how much and to whom will be donated in the local community

5 allowing all residents to vote on the proposal

6 that they are ugly

7 that they kill birds

8 the low frequency noise they emit can adversely affect human health

9 compare an industrial wind complex with nature, trees, and crops

10 how much will the proponent make over the life of the project

11 how much of that money will go onto consumer's electricity prices

12 that they are intrusive

13 disclose how much carbon dioxide will be emitted to manufacture and instal the complex

14 disclose how much carbon dioxide will be saved by the project

15 prove that carbon dioxide causes warming

16 prove that any assumed warming will be detrimental

17 that agricultural aerial activities will increase in cost

18 the likely disruption to drainage patterns

19 disclose how much agricultural land will be removed from production and compare that with the value of electricity generated

20 advise the % capacity of expected wind generation, and compare that with the seven closest other wind complexes

21 advise for each parcel of land to be used and the land from which these turbines will be visible, whether they are owned by people resident there or who live elsewhere

21 that turbines emit a low thrum and the distance to which these can be heard by humans and by dogs

22 undertake to turn off any turbines within these distances that later are complained about by residents or dog owners

23 advise by shaded mapping the areas from which the turbine lights will be seen

24 advise by shaded mapping the areas from which the turbine blades will be visible

25 undertake to remove turbines that show lights or are visible in areas outside these shadings.

26 provide audiologist opinions on the human and animal health effects of wind turbines and the distances to which these apply with applicable mapping.

## **The New York Times**

[The U.S. Will Need Thousands of Wind Farms. Will Small Towns Go Along? - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

# ***The U.S. Will Need Thousands of Wind Farms. Will Small Towns Go Along?***

In the fight against climate change, national goals are facing local resistance. One county scheduled 19 nights of meetings to debate one wind farm.



The Radford's Run Wind Farm in Macon County, Ill. In neighboring Piatt County, residents scheduled 19 nights of hearings this month to debate the merits and drawbacks of a similar project. Mustafa Hussain for The New York Times



By **David Gelles**

Gelles is writing a series of stories about what's getting in the way of a cleaner energy grid.

Dec. 30, 2022

**Climate Forward** There's an ongoing crisis — and tons of news. Our newsletter keeps you up to date. [Get it with a Times subscription](#)

MONTICELLO, Ill. — Depressed property values. Flickering shadows. Falling ice. One by one, a real estate appraiser rattled off what he said were the deleterious effects of wind farms as a crowd in an agricultural community in central Illinois hung on his every word.

It was the tenth night of hearings by the Piatt County zoning board, as a tiny town debated the merits of a proposed industrial wind farm that would see dozens of enormous turbines rise from the nearby soybean and corn fields. There were nine more hearings scheduled.

“It’s painful,” said Kayla Gallagher, a cattle farmer who lives nearby and is opposed to the project. “Nobody wants to be here.”

In the fight against global warming, the federal government is pumping a record \$370 billion into clean energy, President Biden wants the nation’s electricity to be [100 percent carbon-free by 2035](#), and many states and utilities plan to ramp up wind and solar power.

But while policymakers may set lofty goals, the future of the American power grid is in fact being determined in town halls, county courthouses and community buildings across the country.

The only way Mr. Biden’s ambitious goals will be met is if rural communities, which have large tracts of land necessary for commercial wind and solar farms, can be persuaded to embrace renewable energy projects. Lots of them.

According to [an analysis](#) by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, the United States would need to construct more than 6,000 projects like the Monticello one in order to run the economy on solar, wind, nuclear or other forms of nonpolluting energy.

In Piatt County, population 16,000, the project at issue is Goose Creek Wind, which has been proposed by Apex Clean Energy, a developer of wind and solar farms based in Virginia. Apex spent years negotiating leases with 151 local landowners and trying to win over the community, donating to the 4-H Club and a mental health center.

Now, it was making its case to the zoning board, which will send a recommendation to the county board that will make a final call on whether Apex can proceed. If completed, the turbines, each of them 610 feet tall, would march across 34,000 acres of farmland.

The \$500 million project is expected to generate 300 megawatts, enough to power about 100,000 homes. The renewable, carbon-free electricity would help power a grid that currently is fed by a mix of nuclear, natural gas, coal, and some existing wind turbines.

But with more and more renewable energy projects under construction around the country, resistance is growing, especially in rural communities in the Great Plains and Midwest.

“To meet any kind of clean energy goals which brings consumer benefits and energy independence, you’re going to see an increase in projects,” said JC Sandberg, interim chief executive of the American Clean Power Association. “And with those increases in projects, we are facing more of these challenges.”





The 10th night of council meetings in Monticello to debate the proposed Apex wind farm. Mustafa Hussain for The New York Times

On Election Day last month, Apex saw its development efforts for a wind farm in Ohio die when voters in Crawford County [overwhelmingly voted to uphold a ban](#) on such projects. On the same day, voters in Michigan [rejected ordinances](#) that would have allowed construction of another Apex wind project. Earlier this month, local officials in Monroe County, Mich., extended a temporary moratorium on industrial solar projects, delaying plans by Apex to develop a solar farm in the area.

“Projects have been getting more contentious,” said Sarah Banas Mills, a lecturer at the school for environment and sustainability at the University of Michigan who has studied renewable development in the Midwest. “The low hanging fruit places have been taken.”

In Piatt County, the zoning board decided to conduct a mock trial of sorts. During the first nine hearings, Apex and its witnesses made the case that property values would not decline and that other concerns about wind farms — that they are ugly, that they kill birds, or that the low frequency noise they emit can adversely affect human health — were not major issues.

They won some converts. Meg Miner, 61, a resident who was on the fence about the project, decided to support Apex after considering how the project would help fight climate change.

But others were worried about all the issues that the real estate appraiser mentioned, and more. “I moved here for nature, for trees, for crops,” said Sandy Coyle, who lives nearby and opposed the project. “I’m not interested in living near an industrial wind farm.”

Much of that skepticism appeared to be earnest concern from community members who weren’t sold on the project’s overall merits. On the fringe of the debate, however, was a digital misinformation campaign designed to distort the facts about wind energy.

The [website](#) of a group called Save Piatt County!, which opposes the project, is rife with fallacies about renewable energy and inaccuracies about climate science. On Facebook pages, residents opposed to the project shared negative stories about wind power, following a playbook that has been honed in recent years by anti-wind activists, some of whom have ties to the fossil fuel industry. The organizers of the website and Facebook groups did not reply to requests for comment.

As part of the Goose Creek Wind project, Apex has secured [a commitment from Rivian](#), the upstart electric truck company, to buy power from the project, a development that drew skeptical replies in one Facebook group. “Scam artists in it together to fleece middle class taxpayers,” [wrote one local resident](#) in response to a news story about the deal. “Wake up.”

That milieu of misinformation appeared to sway some residents.

“These things are intrusive,” said Kelly Vetter, a retiree who opposed the project and disputed the overwhelming scientific consensus that carbon dioxide emitted from the burning of fossil fuels is dangerously warming the planet. “The company’s never going to have the community’s interest at heart.”



Smack in the middle of the area where Apex wants to erect its turbines sits the Bragg family's farm, a roughly 1,500-acre plot that on a cold December afternoon was little more than an expanse of mud following the fall harvest and a week of rain.

Braxton Bragg, 40, who grew up on the land and returned following stints in the Peace Corps that took him to Mali and Mongolia, supports the project. He is concerned about climate change, and said he already sees its effects. The rain is harder when it comes, the cold sets in later than it used to, and overall, the growing season is less predictable than it was when his grandfather worked the same land.

But his support for wind comes down to economics. Mr. Bragg has agreed to let Apex site one of its turbines on his property, and expects to earn about \$50,000 a year if it is built.

"It's not going to save the farm or allow me to retire," he said. "But just having that steady income every year, you know what you're going to get."

A few miles down the road is Gallagher Farms, another multigenerational operation. Like Mr. Bragg, Ms. Gallagher, 34, believes in climate change. She has invested in cover crops, which absorb carbon and lock it away in the soil, and other regenerative agriculture practices.

But Ms. Gallagher is opposed to the project. The aerial seeding of cover crops will cost more with wind turbines nearby and make it harder for her to sustainably farm. The use of heavy equipment to install turbines can disrupt drainage patterns in agricultural land, and Ms. Gallagher believes her farm will suffer.

Adding to her frustration is the fact that about 70 percent of the landowners who have agreed to let Apex put turbines on their property live outside Piatt County.



Kayla Gallagher, a cattle farmer in Monticello, believes in climate change but opposes the project, fearing that wind turbines might make it harder for her to farm sustainably. Mustafa Hussain for The New York Times

“They don’t live here, so they’re not impacted,” Ms. Gallagher said as she tended to her cattle before heading to yet another hearing.

More than anything else, Ms. Gallagher fears that the wind turbines, which she would see from her front porch, would disrupt the bucolic land she loves. In the predawn hours, she walks outside and listens to the crickets, which she worries will be drowned out by the low thrum of the turbines. At night, she watches the sun set over a grain silo in the west, and doesn’t want the view marred by spinning turbines and flashing lights.

“We all want what’s good for society,” she said. “But it seems to be coming at the expense of our day to day lives.”

Mr. Bragg was sympathetic. “The only real argument that is valid, in my opinion, is that it’s going to change people’s sunsets and the beauty of living out in the country,” he said.

Still, he said, this was working farmland, and it was his right to put it to productive use.

“If you put your nice country house in the middle of my of my business, I’m sorry, there’s not much I can do about that,” Mr. Bragg said. “I think they probably would do the same thing if they were in my boat. The economics takes precedence over everything.”

Landowners like the Braggs would receive about \$210 million in lease payments over the project’s 30-year life, Apex said. There would be other economic benefits including \$90 million in local taxes. And if the project is built, the company said it would it would create eight permanent jobs, and employ nearly 600 people during construction, including men like Brendan Burton.

Mr. Burton, an ironworker who has helped build several nearby wind farms, said the jobs would help fill the void created by factories that have closed or moved overseas.

“We’re not building things here like we used to,” he said. “We need the jobs.”

Mr. Burton added that he wanted to see his community contribute clean energy to the grid as well.

“We can’t keep burning coal or natural gas,” he said.

## **‘We’re going to make people angry’**

The debate in Piatt County has been remarkably civil. Similar hearings elsewhere have descended into shouting matches. In some cases, activists with ties to organizations that shield their donors have turned communities against proposed wind and solar projects.

That was the case in Monroe County, Mich., where local officials recently extended a moratorium that is blocking Apex from developing a solar project.

The opposition in Monroe County includes local residents, but also anti-wind activists with ties to groups backed by Koch Industries, which owns oil refineries, petrochemical plants and thousands of miles of oil and gas pipelines. On Facebook, those skeptical of the Apex project shared negative stories about solar power, and opponents of the project went door to door distributing misinformation.





Attorney Phil A. Luetkehans, who represents community members opposed to the project, on the 10th night of hearings. Mustafa Hussain for The New York Times



On another cold night in December, as the 11th hearing on the Goose Creek Wind project began at the Monticello community building, Phil Luetkehans, a lawyer hired by opponents of the project, called more witnesses, including an audiologist, who discussed what he said were the adverse health effects of wind turbines. A lawyer representing Apex cross-examined him, and the hearing stretched for more than four hours.

“Both sides are getting a full opportunity to portray their position and to put forth the facts, and the people who we elect will make those final decisions,” Mr. Luetkehans said. “Some communities end up saying, ‘No, we don’t want an industrial scale wind at this proximity to homes.’ Others say, ‘Yeah, we want the money.’”

Among those in the audience was Michael Beem, a newly elected member of the Piatt County board, which will ultimately decide whether Apex can build its wind farm. From the back of the room, Mr. Beem was bracing himself to make a choice that will undoubtedly leave this rural community divided.

“No matter what decision we make,” he said, “we’re going to make people angry.”