

Getting Wind of the Dark Side of Wind Turbines

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Can cash-strapped McIntosh County fight the trillion-dollar corporations who are planning to put at least 120 windmills in the Lenna and Hanna areas of McIntosh County.

These windmills are real – wind turbines said to create clean energy for Oklahoma’s future, energy that will be shipped to other states.

Or will they destroy the county's future by ultimately polluting Lake Eufaula, the source of the county's wealth, as many think?

Some opponents say the blades are coated with a “forever chemical” (PFAS) that is toxic and can-do irreversible damage. PFAS are a class of thousands of substances that are widely used in industrial and domestic applications. They have been dubbed ‘forever chemicals’.

However, the American Chemistry Council says Fluoro Technology (comprised of PFAS) is essential to modern life and is an important enabling technology for society.

“Fluorinated chemicals, or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), are a large and diverse family of chemistry that makes possible the products that power our lives — the cellphones, tablets and telecommunications we use every day to connect with our friends and family; the aircrafts that power the U.S. military; alternative energy sources; and medical devices that help keep us healthy. PFAS are vital to enabling our lives in the 21st century,” says the council.

The European Chemical Agency recommends restricting the use of PFAS in applications, including in wind turbines. According to the ACC the wind industry is already using PFAS-free coatings for the rotor blades. And it continuously assesses whether other components and materials may contain PFAS and, if so, whether PFAS-free alternatives are available.

The wind industry acknowledges that in certain use cases downstream industries may need time to develop performant substitute materials, according to the council.

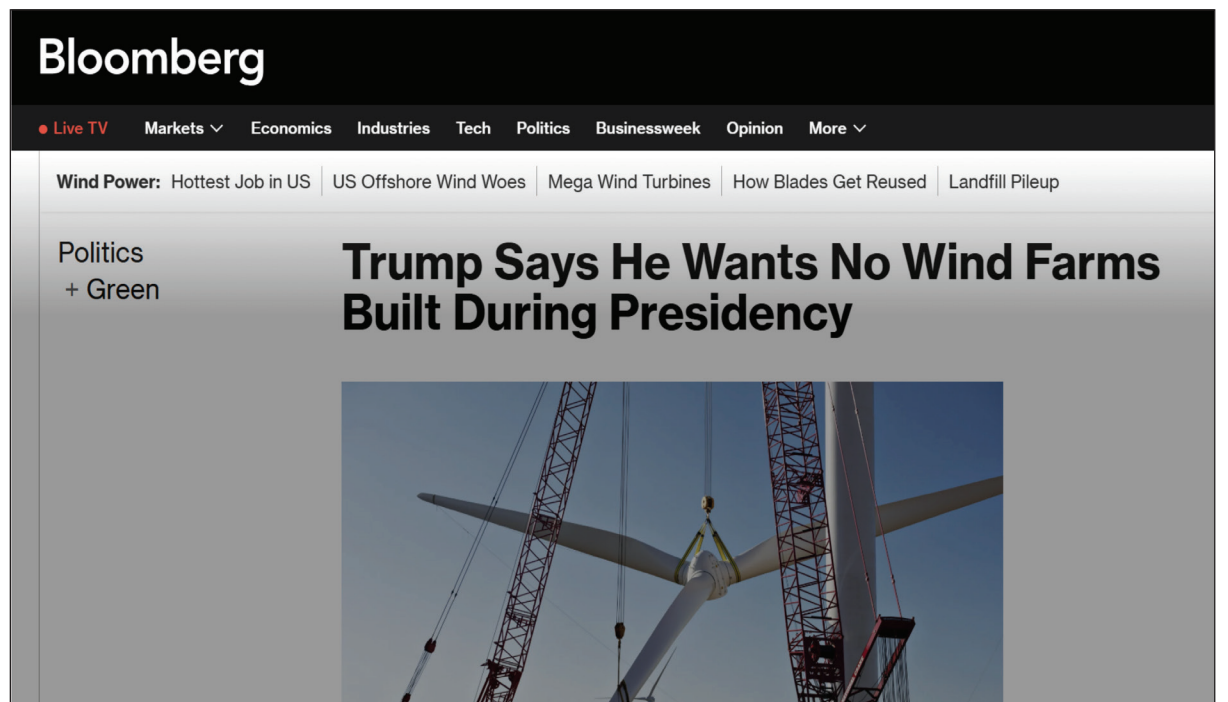
According to Trans-Alta Corporation, based in Canada, the company has lease agreements with more than 25 landowners totaling 22,000 acres.

Opponents of the wind farm project remain skeptical about the use of PFAS, saying chemicals given off by the turbines ultimately end up in the ground water which pollutes that water and eventually migrates to the lake.



They claim the turbines affect the health of humans, livestock, wildlife and the environment, not only by the PFAs but constant shaking of the turbines and drying out the soil beneath them, making it barren.

On Nov. 22, 2024 100 or so protestors attended a community meeting in Hanna. Monday, Nov. 28, 2024 about 50 crammed into the county commissioner's meeting room at their weekly meeting to express their concern. Another was scheduled with the McIntosh County commissioners at their Monday session, Nov. 4, 2024 when Assistant District Attorney Greg Stidham was scheduled to be there and a request by the concerned citizens for a moratorium for three to five years was requested – better yet would be a permanent



moratorium.

District 3 Loyal (Dean) Taylor said Stidham told the commissioners it was doubtful that a moratorium by the commissioners would stand up in court.

Fighting a court battle will get expensive, and the wind farm corporation has a lot more money with which to do battle.

"It could break us," Taylor said. "It's going to cause the county to go broke with lawsuits."

Tim Stacy, who farms and ranches near the wind farm site, was one of the organizers of the protest. He said protesters aren't demanding much, just to postpone the construction until a better study can be conducted.

"We're going to get into a lawsuit any way we go," Stacy said.

Among those at the meeting were Dist. 15 State Representative Tim Turner and District 1 County Commissioners Clifford McElany, District 2 Commissioner-elect Clifford McElhane and District 3 Commissioner Bobby Ziegler (chairman of the board).

Also, Robert Asay who manages a 1,000-acre hunting ranch near the proposed wind farm location.

Asay represents ranch owner Bob Rosene, who made his fortune in the oil and gas industry.

"He's opposed to the wind farm," Asay said.

He fears pollution will harm the deer, turkey, ducks and other wildlife that live on the ranch. "We didn't hear about this until just a few days ago," Asay said. "We're just now getting wind of it."

Most of the people who have attended the meetings claim the wind farm company has kept everyone in the dark, being secretive about filing necessary documents, including identifying the locations and the size and scope of the wind turbines.

But representatives of the company say they have notified everyone they are required to notify, including property owners, OCC, FAA and county commissioners.

The commissioners say the way they were notified was in such a way that they didn't see any imminent danger.

Zeigler said he was led to believe construction was a couple of years away.

However, Holdenville attorney John Baca, who created a moratorium for wind farms in Hughes County, said according to the documents filed by the company they can start construction 60 days after they file notice. Filing took place Sept. 9, 2024.

Apparently, the FAA is the only agency which exercises authority over the project because of the height of the 120 towers. The height issue is to protect life flights safely as they cross the area.

The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality says it has no authority.

Neither does the Oklahoma Corporation Commission.

“They’re putting these things on the tops of ridges and between the North and South Canadian Rivers and the water will all go down to the lake,” Asay said. He said more people need to become aware of the issue. “We need to stop them from putting it in, and the only way to stop them is to not let them start,” he said.

The anti-wind farm movement grows. Some people want the project stopped completely. Others say they want a moratorium for three to five years so that the pros and cons can be thoroughly investigated by non-partisan professionals who can issue a definitive answer to serious questions before the corporations can turn their first spade of dirt, which could mean that it is too late to stop it.

Folks are being enticed by the corporation with a financial windfall – claiming they will donate millions to local schools, provide income and tax revenue. Baca says the corporations lie. Stacy says they won't hire local people or local contractors. "So if (the company) gets sued they can take the case to federal court, not county court," he said.

His property sits on top of an aquifer which supplies water to a lot of people in the area. If pollution gets into the aquifer, hundreds of people will be without water.

Stacy said if something isn't done quickly, "It's going to get ugly." 📢



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