

An Analysis of Anti-Wind Strategies

As a “concerned citizen” I often (probably *too* frequently) find myself in the situation of trying to fix some type of community problem — like propagating wind power.

Through years of valiant efforts — often successful but sometimes not — one thing I have learned is that **being right isn't enough**. As a scientist, this concept is *not* intuitive to my way of thinking. It generally seems to me that the **facts** should determine the outcome.

But no, people being people, that often is not what happens.

This had lead me to a greater appreciation of the value of **Public Relations**. Most people do not understand Public Relations very well, as they confuse it with “advertising”, or categorized as a “pseudo-science” that amounts to a lot of subjective opinions. It's neither.

I now understand Public Relations as really meaning “effective communication.” Clearly any issue stands a better chance of being resolved when there is better communication. Public Relations is most applicable at public meetings, Letters to the Editor, websites, etc.

So how does this apply to local groups or environmental organizations who are against industrial wind power?

Since you will be up against well-financed businesses, money-focused politicians, and maybe even well-intentioned (but misinformed) environmental organizations, it is critical that your group employ a well thought out strategy if you have any hope of success — *and there HAVE been grassroots groups that were successful in fighting off wind developers.*

In my opinion, by far the most important decision that needs to be made is exactly where you want to have the battle, and then carefully controlling things to keep it there.

The problem I see with most groups trying to resist the wind power conglomerate, is that they are fighting the war on the wrong front.

These groups say something like “we will accept wind power if it is sited properly.” Then they work to get “proper siting” to deal with one or more (legitimate) concerns: noise levels, bird flyways, habitat destruction, property devaluation, view setbacks, etc.

In my opinion, this is a MAJOR and usually lethal mistake. Here's why:

1 - This position amounts to a counter-proposal to the developers: that if the turbines are moved X feet in some direction, then the project will be acceptable. Implicit in that is an admission that wind power really works. *This admission is erroneous **and** is usually fatal.*

2 - Once the developers have your acknowledgment that wind power will work (with just a different positioning of turbines), they will then focus on undermining your proposed

adjustments. They do this by bringing in their experts who dispute your noise, etc. findings. The result usually is that it ends up being “He says, She says”. There is almost never a clear cut victory for you on such points — *even though you may well be 100% right!*

3 - Let’s say that the developer agrees with your objection and moves the wind towers X feet in some direction. Are you saying that this is now a good thing, that these wind towers are now an asset to your community? Hopefully not, *but that is also implied with this strategy.*

4 - Framing your group’s position as a siting issue gives the appearance (right or wrong) that this is a NIMBY matter. Be assured that the proponents will put it that way.

5 - You are unlikely to get widespread public support using such tactics, because if another community member isn’t personally affected by your issue (e.g. noise levels) then they could probably care less. *You need broad public support!*

6 - Another problem in garnering public support is presenting multiple, technical issues for average citizens to absorb. *What does Joe Public know about acceptable decibel levels?*

7 - Going down this path will also likely fracture your group. Some will want certain issues front and center, others will want different ones. *This is not a recipe for success.*

8 - Even under the best circumstances — that you prove your point (e.g. that in some cases the noise will be too loud), you will then have to deal with their trump card:

“Yes that may be so, but we all have to make real sacrifices to save the planet.”

Now what are you going to say? *Effectively you’ve lost.*

All this happened because of one thing: **you fought the wrong battle.**

Let’s start over. Your **one** position is that you support **sound scientific solutions** — and wind power is not acceptable as: ***it fails to deliver the goods.***

By this you mean that wind energy:

- 1) is **not** a technically legitimate solution for our grid, or to meaningfully reduce CO2, and
- 2) is **not** a commercially viable source of energy on its own; and
- 3) is **not** environmentally responsible.

Those basic criteria haven’t been selected to make wind power look bad, but are what should be used to evaluate the legitimacy of **any** proposed new alternative source of energy. **You are not against global warming or renewable energy or economic incentives:** *you are only against proposals that don’t make good scientific sense.*

Here are some benefits of this approach:

1 - You are on MUCH stronger technical ground than you would be on any of the secondary issues, as the wind power industry does NOT have proof — anyplace in the world — that CO2 has been materially reduced, or that any coal power plant has been shut down due to wind power added to the grid.

Since there are some 100,000 wind turbines now in operation world wide, such evidence should be plentiful and easy to produce. Maybe it has been too long since I got out of graduate school, but my recollection of how science is *supposed* to work is this:

When a new idea is proposed as a potential solution of a problem, it is up to the solution proponents to PROVE its efficacy — not the other way around.

Here we have businessmen, investors and politicians *proposing* wind power as part of an energy “solution” to global warming. So the ball is in their court as to providing independent, objective **proof** that wind power **is** a viable solution from all pertinent perspectives. THIS HAS NOT YET HAPPENED, and your group should stay focused on that significant vulnerability of theirs.

2 - Once you fully absorb the understanding that wind power **does not work**, then you can see the foolishness of saying that it is OK if it is “sited properly.” {*Exactly what is proper siting for something that does not work?*} Since siting is no longer a major issue, there is an increased likelihood that (if you win) that there will be NO wind project in your community. *Isn't that a MUCH better result than getting one with setbacks?*

3 - Once you get your members educated, they can ALL be on the same page. *Who would be in favor of something that doesn't work?*

4 - Your group will no longer come across to the public as a fractured collection of malcontents trying to protect some niche area of personal interest.

5 - It will be easier to educate the public on this one issue. [See my *Executive Summary*.]

6 - You can still bring in some secondary issues (but only as need be) under the auspices of “wind power is **not** environmentally responsible because...”.

7 - Taking this approach will less likely result in criticism of your group being NIMBYs. Saying that you are against something *because it doesn't work*, is **quite** different from saying that you are against it because it's in your backyard.

8 - You are also less likely to be labeled as anti-green, because you are in **favor** of green solutions to our energy situation — but wind power isn't green and isn't a meaningful solution. There are alternative energy sources that better meet the science/economics/environmental tests much better than wind: like geothermal.

9 - The only good reason to support setbacks is to make them so restrictive that the cost of the project becomes prohibitive and the developer leaves. It is important to do this ONLY after making clear that your position is that wind power does not work. [An excellent

example of scientifically based setbacks is from an ordinance in Trempealeau County, Wisconsin. Find this and others at my site <<<http://www.WindPowerFacts.Info>>>.]

10-Most importantly of all, the “it doesn’t work” strategy **removes** the developer’s trump card. There is no “sacrifice for the planet” anymore, as you have proved that his development doesn’t help the planet one whit.

Hopefully this should show you which path is in your best interest. Let’s say you take my suggestion and fight on the “It doesn’t work” front. Are you still home free?

Almost, but they will likely throw out a new trump card: “OK it may not work, but look at all the money our community will get!”

That’s **good** as you will have successfully ferreted out the **real** driving force here: MONEY.

Here’s how to deal with that:

1 - Anticipate this ending, at the *beginning*. Get your town board (or whoever is advocating this) to make a commitment *before* you show your hand. Get on the public record their answer to your question: “Are you supporting this project because of the global warming benefits, or the money?” *It is almost 100% assured that they will say the former.*

2 - Now at the end, you bring out their documented position and say that you have addressed their good objective of helping with global warming, and shown that this project does NOT help. Therefore you expect them to be good to their word and not support it.

3 - You can point out the fact that the money that the developer is so generously tossing around is not through his own largess — it is taxpayer money in the first place. *Are we really so gullible that we can be bribed with our own money?*

4 - Let’s say that they now admit that it’s only all about the money. This is where you put that position in context. “OK, what I hear you say is that you want to bring money into our community — despite the fact that wind power has *no other meaningful benefit to anyone*, and despite the fact that wind power has *proven environmental liabilities*. Well then I ask you, since this seems to be your thinking, what’s next?”

“Should we expect that you will be signing us up for a regional landfill? How about a toxic chemical plant? How about a slaughterhouse? Maybe a prison for terrorists? Should we clear-cut all our trees to cash in on their value? Maybe a strip mining operation? How about selling our water to Nestle to bottle? These businesses would also employ people and pay taxes — *just like wind power.*”

“We live here. We work here. We have brought up our children here. Our life is here. What is at stake here is our quality of life. As our representative, we want to make this very clear: *our quality of life is not for sale at any price.*”

If done right, this approach will have widespread community support, and that is your best chance for victory.

Let's wrap it up here and just say that despite ALL your good efforts that your representatives refuse to listen to reason, and still choose not to do the right thing. Unfortunately, it happens!

In brief you have two options: **a)** replace them, or **b)** sue them.

The obvious way to replace a person who is a poor representative is to vote them out. But how do you do this if they are entrenched in the system, or elections are a long way off?

One strategy that does work is to get them to resign, through public pressure. (Again you only embark on this option after you have exhausted the polite attempts at conversion.)

Another effective tactic is to form a Political Action Committee (PAC). Since this is a legal matter, it is discussed in our *Some Legal Options* report (see WindPowerFacts.Info).

The good news is that if you have gone about this in the proper way, then you have set the stage for a lawsuit (a latter level recourse) that is likely to be successful.

Because there is a lot to the legal aspect topic, please refer to the aforementioned *Some Legal Options* report for more information.

Whatever your strategy, to be successful your group **must** get a sound understanding of the wind power matter before taking on the developers or local politicians.

There is a wealth of applicable information (particularly the first five reports) at my web page: <<<http://www.WindPowerFacts.Info>>>.

Please consider the findings of independent, environmentally concerned scientists that are listed at that page. “Wind Power References” (in the *Getting Up To Speed* package) also has considerably more detail.

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