

Opinion

Another Voice / Environment

Another Voice: No evidence supports the claim of health damage caused by wind turbines

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By Alan H. Lockwood

Earlier this month, in what was a serendipitous prelude to Earth Day, Apex Clean Energy sponsored an open house in Barker as a part of its plan to build the Lighthouse wind farm on the shore of Lake Ontario.

When complete, the turbines will generate enough electricity to power 53,000 homes, pay landowners rent for the use of their property, generate jobs and provide other financial benefits.

From my perspective, it will supply its electricity without the emissions of particulates, oxides of sulfur and nitrogen, mercury and other toxicants that come from burning fossil fuels.

In my book, "The Silent Epidemic, Coal and the Hidden Threat to Health," I wrote that you will not find burning coal on death certificates. However, it is clear that air pollution, largely from burning coal, makes a major contribution to the four leading causes of death in the United States – heart disease, cancer, respiratory disease (especially childhood asthma) and stroke. It is probable that this list will expand to include Type II diabetes and possibly Alzheimer's disease.

Also, wind power does not produce carbon dioxide, the gas most responsible for climate change and the health impacts it is certain to cause. These are facts, reported in numerous peer-reviewed scientific journals, the standard for evidence-based decision-making.

There were lots of angry people at the meeting, some distributing lawn signs that said: "Too Loud, Too Close." Their concerns are not well supported by peer-reviewed data. These feelings, as described in the literature, are most properly referred to as an annoyance due to subjective factors such as visual impact and a general attitude toward wind turbines.

These feelings should be taken seriously, but there are no studies that clearly link health problems (other than anger and annoyance) with audible or inaudible sounds from wind turbines. "Wind Turbine Syndrome" can't be shown to exist. Unlike fossil-fuel derived pollution, credible scientific evidence does not support claims of adverse health effects due to wind turbines.

Farmers should be leaders in the struggle to mitigate climate change. Remember the heat wave several years ago that caused early blooms in orchards followed by frost that led to severe crop loss? Excessive heat also impairs pollination and causes poor yields. West Texas farmers refer to wind as the crop that never fails.

The Lighthouse project will be good for health, the economy of the area and help New York meet its obligation to reduce carbon dioxide pollution as called for by the Clean Power Plan. It deserves an evidence-based decision and our support.

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