

My Voice: Xcel Energy's wind zone endangers citizens

I was alarmed by the recent announcement by Xcel Energy of plans for a huge industrial wind zone in east central South Dakota near Watertown, Clark and Clear Lake. The announcement was crafted so as to make us believe it will be good for citizens in that area. In fact, a growing number of us believe that couldn't be farther from the truth.

It was interesting to learn that the Minnesota Legislature this year is considering a law (House Bill 2170) to increase the setback for industrial wind towers in that state to 10 times the height of the tower to address noise issues experienced at existing wind zones. It's likely that Xcel Energy won't be allowed exploit and endanger the citizens of its home state of Minnesota anymore. The truth is that our neighboring state of Minnesota has learned a hard lesson. They have learned that industrial wind towers endanger people, animals and even the environment. The truth is that the technology used in industrial wind exploitation is not and will never be, what we were led for decades to believe.

It makes sense now, the real motive for the timing and release of Xcel's wind energy propaganda message goes like this: 1) There is a deadline to claim billions of dollars in federal Production Tax Credit subsidy for building wind towers. 2) Current subsidies were narrowly enacted by the previous administration and called for phase-out of PTC over five years. 3) A new, more conservative congress and administration in Washington, D.C., are likely to accelerate the phase out or even end wasteful PTC this year. Free money for wind developers is ending and they are scrambling to get every penny.

This S.D. citizen believes that Xcel Energy has decided to build industrial wind towers anywhere where it can, as fast as it can, as long as it can get away with it. And for them, they can do it right next door in S.D. (setback in S.D. can be as little as two times the height of a tower).

Undoubtedly slick-talking lobbyists for Big Wind have told Xcel that local county governments in S.D. lack resources to study current research into the impact industrial wind. Unfortunately, it appears they may be right. Based on recent events, it appears many local S.D. government administrators lack the vision to learn from mistakes the rest of the world already made with industrial wind. They routinely fail to fully advise lawmakers on the issue. Sadly, it also looks like many local elected officials who are well informed may lack the courage to stand up to slick attorneys and lobbyists for big wind and fail to protect the citizens who elected them.

The sham of industrial wind energy is finally being debunked with science and fact. The resulting public opposition to the ineffective and dangerous technology used for industrial wind exploitation is growing stronger. Lawmakers and citizens throughout the country now correctly see industrial wind, as it currently exists, as dangerous and wasteful. Other states are taking action to enact laws that protect communities from those threats. Industrial wind exploitation

currently threatens every S.D. County. All levels of S.D. lawmakers should also take action to ensure our future isn't ruined because decades old S.D. laws have not been updated.

The world deserves truly renewable energy sources that are proven to be a positive impact on climate change. The people of America deserve to have affordable and reliable energy. And South Dakotans deserve protection from dangers and industrialization that Xcel has painted green, wrapped in the U.S. flag and called a huge positive opportunity in wind energy.

South Dakotans should learn the facts about industrial wind. Then call their county commissioners – who make the local land use laws – to discuss it. Commissioners must clearly understand they are accountable for protecting their constituents from endless, ceaseless, dangerous industrial wind turbines that don't make a contribution to anything but the lining of the pockets of big business.

MY VOICE

Winnie Peterson lives in rural Lincoln County. She is a volunteer and is chair of WE-CAREsd.org, a nonprofit community service group of volunteer South Dakotans who oppose unsafe and inappropriate siting of for-profit industrial wind zones and advocates for local land use laws that prevent it; we-caresd.org. My Voice columns should be 500 to 700 words. Submissions should include a portrait-type photograph of the author. Authors also should include their full name, age, occupation and relevant organizational memberships.

Send columns to Argus Leader, Box 5034, Sioux Falls, SD 57117-5034, fax them to 605-331-2294 or email them to letters@argusleader.com.