

OPINION: A lot of wind about turbines blowing through SD

By [Rob Johnson](#) on Jun 1, 2015 at 8:55 p.m.

Wind power is providing big benefits to South Dakota, supplying more than a quarter of our electricity and paying local landowners more than \$2 million a year for leasing their land to wind turbines. I would like to address a recent column that propagated many misleading criticisms of this local success story.

First, wind power was never intended to be a standalone power delivery system. Anyone with an understanding of the power industry knows that a wind farm does not deliver power directly to a user, but rather to a power distribution infrastructure. The power system consists of a complex transmission and distribution grid with many power sources (coal, nuclear,

gas turbines, hydro, wind, solar, others). These all work together to match the total customer demand with the current generation, every second, every hour, every day.

Our local community has the opportunity to receive substantial funds without increasing our tax burden. The South Dakota Department of Revenue projected the tax benefits at the proposed 100 megawatt basis, and the revenue is significant. It is estimated that \$300,000 per year would be generated, and these funds would be split between the state, local school districts, townships and county.

Of this \$300,000, 50 percent would go to the local school district, 15 percent would go to the local townships and the remaining 35 percent would go to the county. There would also be additional tax revenue generated by Gross Receipts Tax that is directly tied to wind production.

At the same proposed 100 megawatt basis, the additional tax would generate \$2 million per year to the state, local county, townships and schools. Local schools would be able to construct new facilities, invest in new technology and purchase equipment, townships and counties in the footprint would also receive tax dollars to support road repairs, build bridges and make updates to the infrastructure. The tax revenue and economic benefits for landowners that could be provided by wind energy is significant.

Although land use contracts vary widely, most contracts that I have seen require the removal of the equipment if the site is no longer being used to produce electricity. Certainly, it would be possible that a company could go under and not be financially able to fulfill its contractual commitments, but the assumption that the towers will sit there rusting away forever assumes

that the salvage value is less than the cost to remove the equipment. It seems like quite a stretch to make such an assumption without any supporting data.

There are also many scientifically unsupported claims for things like soil depletion, underground vibrations, flicker and noise. None of these claims have a basis in reality and are not supported by actual legitimate scientific studies. In reality, there are rules and regulations that limit the noise, and there are setback requirements to minimize actual impact on adjoining property.

No energy source has zero impact, but wind energy has zero pollution making it one of the lowest impact energy sources we have available. South Dakota is blessed with plentiful wind resources and it would be a shame to not take advantage of them due to misinformed opinions