



North American Platform Against Windpower

Call for Wind Energy 'Reality Check'

The North American Platform Against Windpower (NA-PAW) was formed in early 2009, following the example of the European Platform Against Windpower ([EPAW](#)) which was founded in Paris on October 4, 2008, by French, German, Spanish, and Belgian organizations. Since then, 350 European organizations from 19 countries have joined EPAW in a call for a halt to industrial wind facility construction to conduct a thorough study of wind power's effects on the environment, people's lives, the economy, and the energy system.

Like EPAW, NA-PAW supports renewable energy schemes when they are effective and socially, economically, and environmentally acceptable. Wind energy installations are often pushed through under pressure from financial or ideological interest groups with little regard for the communities or ecosystems affected. Under the mantle of "clean and green", the claims of wind developers are not subjected to the proper scrutiny necessary for such large and expensive installations. They are often exempted from proper regulatory review that would protect the environment and hosting communities.

The necessarily sprawling facilities, huge towers, and turning blades required to collect such a diffuse resource as wind degrades and fragments wildlife habitat and threatens the health and well-being of nearby residents. And the effectiveness of large-scale wind energy remains problematic.

- Wind power's contribution to reducing CO₂ emissions or fossil fuel use is limited, because other power plants must be kept on line -- and used more often and less efficiently -- to compensate for the intermittent and variable nature of electricity generated by wind turbines.
- Increasing numbers of large wind facilities require thousands of miles of new high-voltage transmission lines and more control installations to maintain grid stability in the face of the erratic nature of wind energy. These add substantially to the already high costs of wind energy and further degrade the environment while also raising eminent domain issues.
- Even after several decades of technical development, wind energy remains economically unviable. Wind power devours colossal amounts of public money and depends on artificial markets for its existence. Considering the minuscule benefit, our money ought to be better spent.
- Wind facilities are significantly altering the natural and cultural heritage of rural and wild areas that are otherwise protected from such levels of development. They threaten tourism, leisure, and recreation. They have an obvious negative impact on property values, which for homeowners often represent the fruits of a lifetime of work.
- The noise and flicker of giant wind turbines cause loss of sleep, stress, and other health effects in nearby residents. "Wind turbine syndrome", caused by the effect of low-frequency noise on

the organs of the inner ear, is widely reported.

- Wind facilities imperil wildlife and destroy natural habitats which have hitherto escaped the destructive powers of earth-moving equipment, concrete operations, and other highly invasive human activities.

The North American Platform Against Windpower therefore calls for a "reality check" on industrial wind energy, to examine its actual record and cumulative impacts.

- **Carbon savings:** How much carbon dioxide is emitted during the manufacture, shipping, construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of wind energy facilities? How much is potential carbon displacement reduced by the indirect effects of grid integration, such as preferred response with hydro or lower-carbon natural gas, or extra CO₂ emitted due to more frequent ramping or running fossil fuel-fired stations at lower efficiency in compensating for the power fluctuations of wind-generated electricity?
- **Economic impact:** What are the direct and indirect costs of wind power, including the impact on overall public expenditure and, over the long term, on electricity charges for consumers. Cost analysis should include subsidies, fiscal advantages, regulatory tariffs, and special markets which benefit the wind industry, and the cost of building power stations and/or storage mechanisms to balance unstable wind power, upgrading and installing power lines to transport wind power from remote areas to load centers, building control centers to regulate the wind's unpredictable variability, and upgrading electricity networks. What is the actual cost to hosting communities?
- **Social impact:** What is the impact of wind energy facilities on quality of life and rural amenity? What are the effects of changes to the environment on local residents and visitors? What is the impact of wind facilities on property values, recreation, and tourism?
- **Health impact:** What is the impact of wind energy facilities on human health? Existing "gag orders" in leases and easements must be cut through to determine the full range of health effects caused by noise, flicker, and possible ground current from buried cables.
- **Environmental impact:** What natural habitats and otherwise protected landscapes have been and will be sacrificed as a result of erecting wind energy facilities? What are the individual and cumulative effects of existing and proposed wind energy facilities and associated infrastructure on wildlife and ecosystems? What is the extent to which the construction and operation of wind turbine facilities pollute the ground cover, topsoil, groundwater, streams, and rivers? Particular attention should be paid to the effects on the environment of contamination resulting from lubricants leaking from worn or collapsed wind turbines, detergents used to remove dirt and insects from turbine blades, the large-scale use of concrete for their bases, the excavation and compacting of the area around the towers, and the construction of access roads.

Documentation continues to grow of the negative effects of industrial wind turbines on people, landscapes, tourism, property values, wildlife, and public budgets. A "reality check" is long overdue.

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