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Wind turbines will help meet energy needs

By Dale E. Thompson

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When I look out on my land, I am looking out on four generations of family history on this same site in Champaign County. Roots run deep here, and so does our responsibility to steward the land for the next generations to come.

Champaign County's biggest industry is agriculture. While farmers are always working to get the most from the land, we also understand that we have to follow sustainable practices so that the earth will keep producing.

We have in Champaign County the opportunity to protect our farmland for future generations — by embracing the development of wind power in our community. EverPower's Buckeye Wind Project, which is being reviewed by the state right now, is an appropriate agricultural land use for the 21st century.

Wind turbines and the lease revenue they will bring to landowners are just as valid an agricultural property use as the living earned by raising livestock and growing crops. It's another form of harvesting: this time, it happens to be the wind. Just like the land produces food, the wind can also produce a product that everyone needs every day — electric energy.

As we move forward as a state, country and world toward solving the global energy crisis, Champaign County can take a leading role as home to Ohio's first wind farm generating power for the electric grid. But some people don't want that to happen. While I'm convinced they are a small minority — although a very, very loud one — I am puzzled why they are so determined to prevent the use of wind resources.

The process to establish a wind farm in Ohio is new, but to listen to the opposition you would think this is the first time ever a wind farm has been proposed where people live. It is new territory for Ohio, but the Buckeye Wind Project is following regulation and the law. It's probably under even more scrutiny — not less — because it's the first in the state.

The opposition is making every effort to question aspects of the project that are under active consideration not only by Buckeye Wind, but, more important, by the state authority that will decide how it moves forward. There are two sides to every story, and the large majority of the residents in our community have the right for our voices to be heard.

Wind turbines will become a part of our landscape through the Buckeye Wind Project, and I hope for the day when I look out from my front porch and see a turbine generating power for clean energy and money for my neighbors and civic services in our community.

Four generations ago, these turbines would have surely shocked the residents of Champaign County — just as they would not have known what to make of the cell phone towers that dot the countryside. There aren't any skyscrapers in Champaign County, but there are already more than 25 structures over 200 feet tall. Wind turbines will fit right into this environment and provide more jobs and services locally and beyond.

Although the agricultural use of property can indeed be beautiful, farmers do not operate for the scenic pleasure of others. The money we earn raising crops and livestock, which we have been able to supplement with other agriculture-appropriate property uses, goes to pay the mortgage and send our kids to college.

I understand that not everyone is going to share my point of view, but I stand on the side of property rights, the protection of our rural community from urban sprawl and just plain common sense. Those who continue to voice complaints about the Buckeye Wind Project stand in the camp of "not in my back yard." My question is, where does their back yard end — and mine begin?

Dale E. Thompson

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esidents concerning wind turbines for the past two years. He helped develop

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