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To CVPS: Steer clear of wind

JUSTIN TURCO

To Bob Young, president of Central Vermont Public Service:

I was very disappointed to hear that CVPS has purchased 30 percent of the actual output from the 99-megawatt (installed capacity) industrial wind facility in Coos County, N.H. By doing that you supported the construction of 33 miles of new roads in high alpine areas that are presently roadless.

Now I am reading press reports that CVPS is buying output from the 30-megawatt Iberdrola project that will be blasted right in the middle of some of Vermont's most critical black bear habitat. Did you know this project area has 28,000 bear-clawed beech trees which were found on a block of land approximately 2.25 by 2.25 miles? Are you aware of the strong opposition to destroying that important habitat by the Agency of Natural Resources? Only two of the three appointed members of the Public Service Board gave the OK to destroy the two ridge lines on National Forest lands which are owned by the citizens of the United States.

I use those woods. Deep, quiet, and dark, they are a Vermonter's Yellowstone National Park and part of our nation's national treasure, as far as I'm concerned. When I ponder the idea that my taxes are used for setting land aside for public ownership in special places like this, I don't consider or accept the eventual handing of it to an industrial wind developer, particularly not one that is from Spain.

I realize that there are policies that require a specific amount of Vermont's power come from renewable resources. I favor these policies, but would like to point out that when I last checked we were meeting the standards that have been set. Which means Vermont's investment in hydro, biomass, cow power and solar have worked well for us. Additionally, Vermont produces less carbon emissions per unit in the generation of electricity than any other state in the country.

As with the Coos County project, by buying into Iberdrola's potential generation, you once again are supporting and add false credibility to, a significant environmental destruction. CVPS is also contributing to the increase in our electricity rates. You will pay a higher price for wind, but not as high as it would be were it not for huge subsidies. The Energy Information Administration shows that wind is subsidized at 34 times the rate hydro is and 26 times the rate that biomass is. At least with cow power (something I approve of) I get to choose whether or not I want to pay for it in my electric bill.

Bob Young, by agreeing to this contract, CVPS is creating "theoretical" demand for something that wastefully spends your ratepayers tax dollars. The Department of Energy says 84 percent of the American tax dollars which are spent on promoting renewables are going to foreign wind developers. The Spanish developer whose power you are buying has so far received \$545

million from the people of the United states. They are getting another \$477 million in 2010. That's over a billion dollars of taxpayer money.

As you know, wind developers earn renewable energy credits. They hope to sell them to companies who produce things we buy. In a world driven by carbon credits the renewable energy credits will be a company's ticket to continue to operate. As an airline pilot and occasional traveler I will pay twice for this sort of thing. Steel mill workers and steel consumers will suffer, and fossil-fueled power plants will be hit. Just to name a few.

If a developer can get construction started by Dec. 31, 2010, they are eligible for 30 percent reimbursement for the cost of the project from the citizens of the United States. Without all this free money, would a Spanish company be interested in Vermont's mountains? No. And certainly not if CVPS wasn't willing to "on paper" buy the measly power that they will produce. Americans pay to buy the land and then pay both forward and backward to enable its destruction.

Finally, it's easy to see wind isn't free, but it needs to be, because after all this money "we" spend, it makes a very poor contribution to the grid. You and I both know wind generation can't compare with the type of real and steady work that Vermont Yankee and Hydro-Quebec presently do in the grid. With 34,000 megawatts of installed capacity in New England, and a peak daily load of around 20,000 megawatts, we won't come close to using any wind power that is actually made available. More importantly, no matter how much wind is installed, when the wind blows our grid manager isn't going to rely on that power because it's so variable. All of this leads me to conclude the sacrifice that Vermonters will make to install industrial wind is far too great for what we get in return.

CVPS needs to keep investing in the renewables that we've used in the past, meanwhile looking to the future for opportunity which will actually benefit Vermonters. Good move buying Omya's hydro operation. Expensive yes, but more forecastable, less variable and way less harmful to the well-being of Vermont. Be it on Grandpa's Knob, Herrick Mountain or the National Forest, stay away from industrial wind.

Justin Turco is a resident of Ira.
