

September 19, 2019

Good afternoon,

I am Robert Ciesielski, a volunteer board member of the local Niagara Group of the Sierra Club and Chair of the Energy Committee of the New York Atlantic Chapter. While The Sierra Club is supportive of wind, solar and hydro projects, we will take a hard look, based on environmental studies, to make sure any project will protect drinking water and the environment in Lake Erie. We opposed the resolution before your committee seeking a ban on turbines in Lake Erie before a proposal has even been submitted, and before a proper environmental review has taken place, based upon speculative, and in our opinion, incorrect information often sourced from the fossil fuel industry.

Our time for comments today is limited, but we would be willing to meet with legislators and provide statistical and scientific information on the issues. Several of the issues I would like to discuss today in favor of turbines are the threats of global climate change and of the fossil fuel and nuclear industries to the lakes, the environmental and economic benefits of wind turbines, answering several statements made in the pending resolution, and the need of the State and the nation, including Western New York, to develop renewable energy. In particular, we must meet the important goals set forth in the State's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act calling for a reduction of man-made emissions from energy use by 85% below 1990 levels by the year 2050.

Concerning Lake Erie, some of its greatest threats have come from the warming of its waters brought about by climate change, which contribute to the growth of toxic algae blooms, threatening drinking water, fish and bird life. The warmed atmosphere holds 5% more moisture than previously and has caused climate disruption, including heavy and torrential rain storms

which raise water levels to damage property and cause sewage overflows into the lake. Fertilizers and toxic chemicals are also washed into the lake. Warming winters interspersed with freezes harm agriculture, as do periods of extended droughts of hotter weather. Acid rain from coal plants kills fish. Chemical waste from fracking for methane gas continues to cause contamination of drinking water supplies and illness to humans, animals and birds in Pennsylvania and Ohio. The danger of nuclear plants and nuclear waste sites, such as at West Valley, pose an ongoing threat to the entire region. Renewable energy sources based on wind, solar and hydro power can reduce these serious threats.

The proponents of the ban take for granted that property values will be threatened. However, ten major studies in the United States, Canada and Great Britain demonstrate that property values remain the same or rise, and that wind turbines bring economic benefits to the area. Locally, the continued rise in real property values in sight of the Steel Winds projects demonstrates this trend. While no specific proposal for a turbine development site in Lake Erie has even yet been submitted, turbines would generally be placed miles from the shore. I am handing up to Chairman Meyers an illustration, based upon a modeling of the proposed wind turbine project off Cleveland, showing the view of turbines as small blips on the horizon.

Concerning alleged bird losses from turbines, studies have shown that per unit of electricity produced, bird losses are many times less than losses from fossil fuel production, waste pits, burning and habitat loss. Studies of bird migratory patterns show where turbines should be placed. Monitoring cameras and radar used with turbines are being used in Europe and along the Texas Gulf Coast to slow or halt blades during times of bird activity. The reputable National Audubon Society has been concerned for years that unless global climate change is controlled, the Earth risks losing 50% of its bird life and species.

Concerning fears stated that wind turbines will kill fish and disrupt sediments, I would note that the experience of offshore wind in Europe and the first U.S. offshore wind project near Block Island, Rhode Island shows an increase in fish stocks, and that turbine bases actually form reefs which become fish nurseries. Recreational fishing has improved near the Block Island turbines.

As to pollutants, a new technology being used in North Atlantic and proposed in the Cleveland, Ohio project - a "suction bucket" - supports turbines without pile driving, with minimal noise, and very temporary disturbance where the turbines are placed. Fears of oil leakage into the water ignore that current technology allows spent lubricating oil to be absorbed and collected, and removed during regular maintenance.

The argument that turbines will cause interference with military radar which may risk local jobs by closing military stations is incorrect. The military has developed radar able to compensate for turbines, which is currently used on military air bases in California.

In actuality, wind supplies some 6.5% of the electricity in the United States. The national average for the sale of wind power through purchase agreement with utilities is 2 cents per kilowatt hour. There are thousands of offshore and onshore wind turbines in Europe. The vast majority of Germans and Danes want greater development of turbines and do not suffer alleged syndromes.

The Sierra Club is one of the 180 businesses, faith-based groups, community organizations, labor unions and councils, and environmental groups that developed and supported the enactment of New York State's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. This Act was passed this June by the New York State Senate by a two to one margin and by a vote of 111 to 35 in the Assembly. Besides the significant reduction of greenhouse gas

emissions the law requires, this monumental legislation also calls for 70% of our State's electricity to be provided from solar, wind, hydro and other renewable sources by 2030. This bill requires that workers on renewable energy and energy efficiency projects be paid prevailing wages. The economic benefits under the bills will be substantial. Labor unions and many businesses support this legislation.

The vast majority of the world's scientists say that a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is necessary, in order to avoid the worst effects of climate change upon the Earth, our children and all species of animals, birds, and fish.

We feel that the two resolutions presented to the legislature are an attempt to halt what the majority of Republicans and Democrats in our country are demanding: clean and sustainable energy. Please do not let fear tactics prevent the review of wind turbines in our area, the chance to create jobs and investments, and the chance to protect our children from the climate crisis and global warming.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert M. Ciesielski  
Sierra Club, Atlantic Chapter Energy Committee Chair  
(716) 481-8053  
rmciesie@yahoo.com

## Supplemental Statement of Robert M. Ciesielski

The Sierra Club's goal is to protect Lake Erie's drinking water as well as fish, birds and wildlife. We also seek to prevent the death of Lake Erie. The development of wind power, solar power, and hydro and the electrification of our energy system is necessary, in order to eliminate the release of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane and soot into the atmosphere. These emissions are the main human-produced causes of climate change.

The present resolution before the Energy and Environment Committee is a preemptive strike to prevent Erie County from even thinking about wind sourced electricity, how it can protect the environment while creating less expensive power and creating job and investment opportunities. If the resolution was adopted, we would be forced to face climate change with one hand tied behind our back.

It is sad and ironic that this anti-wind resolution is being discussed in Erie County while at the same time the world's 2019 United Nations Climate Summit will be commencing in New York City in a heroic effort to limit global warming and keep temperatures from rising above 1.5 degrees Celsius, or 2.8 degrees Fahrenheit. Yesterday, the 16-year-old Swedish activist, Greta Thunberg spoke to Committees of the U.S. Congress and Senate asking that our representatives listen to science and to act on the climate crisis to protect the Earth and its children.

Besides Great Britain, and Pope Francis, some 1,000 countries and jurisdictions have declared a "climate emergency" for the Earth. Yet the United States is the only nation in the world to announce its intention to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement.

Robert M. Ciesielski, Esq.  
Law Offices at 1332 Walden Avenue  
Cheektowaga, New York 14211  
(716) 481-8053  
rnciesie@yahoo.com