

**SENATE BILL 52
PROPONENT TESTIMONY
WALT POFFENBAUGH
HURON COUNTY, OHIO
MARCH 9, 2021**

Chairman Peterson, Vice-Chairman Schuring, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Committee. My name is Walt Poffenbaugh. I live in Norwich Township, in Huron County. My family moved to rural Huron County 24 years ago, after the State Highway Patrol sent me there to be the Post Commander of the Norwalk Post. I retired from that position several years ago. Our residence is in the footprint of the Emerson Creek industrial wind turbine project in Huron County.

I would like to speak today to the matter of cumulative impact. Fourteen years ago, the National Research Council of the National Academies of Science published a 376-page resource compendium entitled Environmental Impacts of Wind-Energy Projects. The purpose of this report was to assist policy makers in the assessment of impacts from industrial wind and inform both siting and operational decisions. Since 2007, decision-makers have been encouraged to ask: “How will cumulative effects be assessed, and what will be included in that assessment (i.e. the effects of other wind energy installations, or of all other electricity generators, or of all other anthropogenic impacts on the area?”¹

My comments will primarily address the cumulative impact of the Republic Wind, Emerson Creek Wind and the as yet to be applied for Honey Creek Wind projects. These three projects abut one another, and cover portions of Sandusky, Seneca, Erie, Huron, and Crawford Counties in Northwest Ohio. The wind developer of all three of these projects is Apex Clean Energy. The Ohio Power Siting Board considers these as separate projects despite the fact they are all being promoted by the same developer, and are literally butted up to each other. It is my opinion that it is impossible to discuss Emerson Creek Wind without also taking into account the impact of other currently pending projects.

Republic Wind and Emerson Creek Wind combined encompass 130,378 acres in portions of four adjacent counties in Northwest Ohio. 130,378 acres translates to 203 square miles. Apex Clean Energy has yet to file the application for Honey Creek Wind in Crawford and Seneca Counties with the OPSB. The total acres this project will cover have not yet been determined for the project but we know the

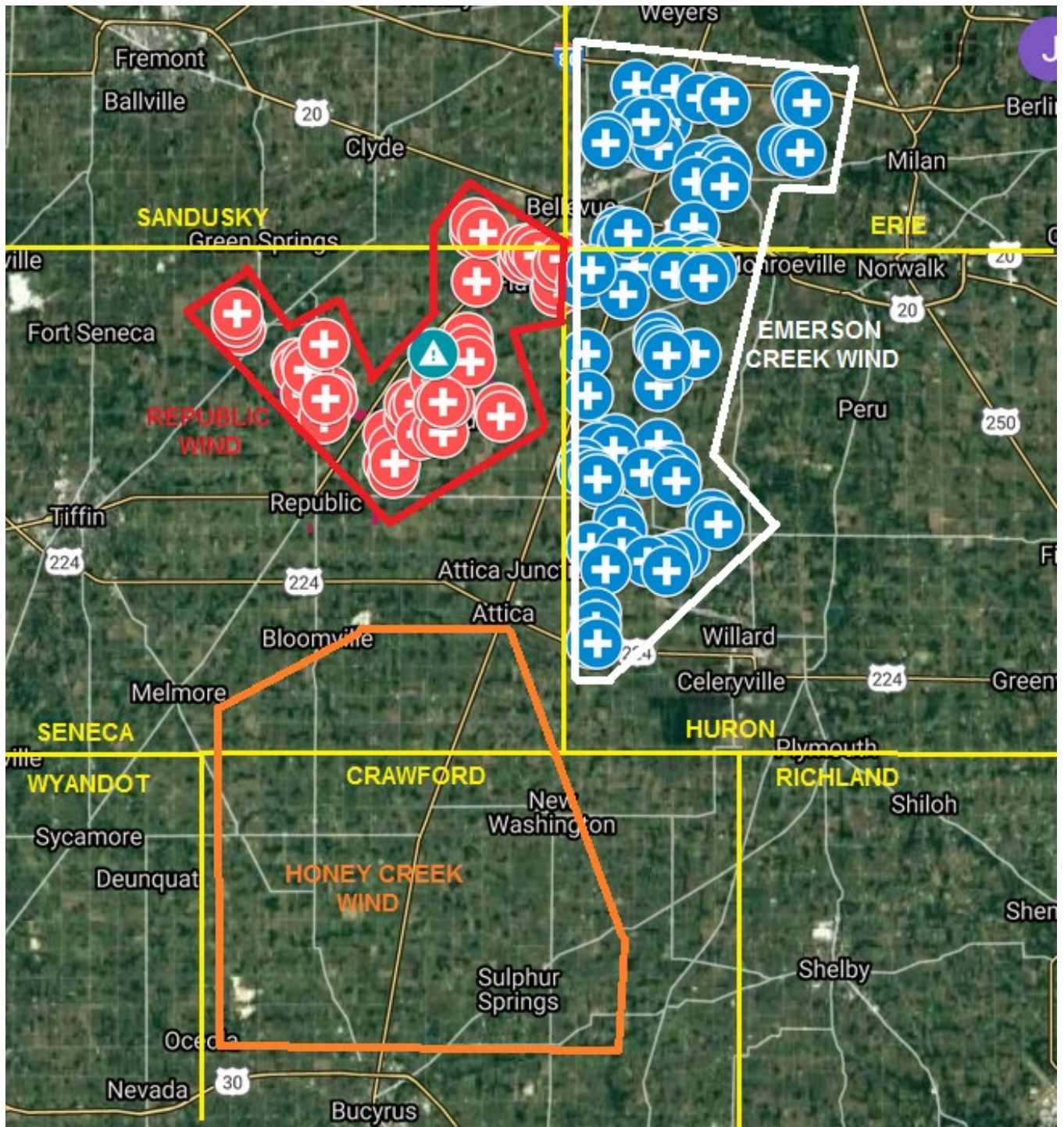
¹ Environmental Impacts of Wind-Energy Projects. National Research Council 2007 page 215.

developer has been signing up landowners to leases in an approximate 200 square mile area. The total square miles covered by the three projects can be estimated at over 400 square miles.

I know it is difficult to gain a perspective of just how large an area this is, so permit me to provide reference. The City of Columbus, which I imagine all of you are familiar with, covers 212 square miles. This sprawling city, which contains our State Capitol, is roughly one half the size of the area which will be used for the three projects currently proposed by Apex Clean Energy in my area of North Central Ohio.

Imagine, an industrial wind turbine area, containing turbines which are 655 feet tall, filling an area twice the size of the City of Columbus, covering a portion of five counties. Please note that this is just the area wind developers need for the current three proposed projects. Additional projects will obviously encroach on even more agricultural/residential land in our section of Ohio. We have it on good authority there are two more industrial wind projects in the immediate area which are in the pre-development stage by the same developer. These are known locally as Emerson Creek West and Buck Springs.

I have included a map which details the latitude and longitude locations of the turbines on file with the Federal Aviation Administration for Republic Wind and Emerson Creek Wind, as well as the projected area which will contain the as yet applied for Honey Creek Wind projects. (See Figure 1)



(Figure 1)

The turbine placements of the two projects currently in the adjudication phase are as follows:

| <i>Project</i> | <i>Total Leased Acres</i> | <i>Square Miles</i> | <i>Turbines</i> | <i>Nameplate Generating Capacity/MW</i> | <i>Square Miles per Turbine</i> |
|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Republic Wind | 32,478 | 50.74 | 50 | 200 | 1.01 |
| Emerson Creek Wind | 41,000 | 64.06 | 62 | 297 | 1.03 |

(Source: OPSB Project Applications on File 07/2019)

The wind developer has consistently referred to our area as “lightly populated” and “primarily rural”.

Figures compiled by the Ohio Development Services Agency, and used in the wind developers own applications show:

Table 08-18. County and State Population Trends and Densities

| County | 2000 Population | 2010 Population | 2017 Population | % Annual Change 2000-2017 | Est. 2030 Population | % Change 2017-2030 | 2017 Population Density (people per square mile) |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--|
| Crawford County | 46,966 | 43,784 | 41,746 | -0.7% | 38,334 | -8.2% | 105.7 |
| Erie County | 79,551 | 77,079 | 74,817 | -0.4% | 71,483 | -4.5% | 297.5 |
| Huron County | 59,487 | 59,626 | 58,494 | -0.1% | 57,752 | -1.3% | 119.4 |
| Sandusky County | 61,792 | 60,944 | 59,195 | -0.2% | 57,320 | -3.2% | 251.5 |
| Seneca County | 58,683 | 56,745 | 55,243 | -0.3% | 52,817 | -4.4% | 101.1 |
| State of Ohio | 11,353,140 | 11,536,504 | 11,658,609 | 0.2% | 11,900,779 | 2.1% | 282.3 |

Source: EDR, 2019a.

(Source: Emerson Creek Wind Farm application)

These figures mean nothing unless you compare them to areas of the state with existing industrial wind turbine facilities.

| County | 2000 | 2010 | 2017 | % Change 2000-2017 | Population Density 2017 |
|----------|--------|--------|--------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Hardin | 31,966 | 32,058 | 31,364 | -2.2% | 66.59 |
| Paulding | 20,297 | 19,614 | 18,845 | -3.9% | 44.9 |
| Van Wert | 29,654 | 28,744 | 28,217 | -1.8% | 68.82 |

(Source: Ohio Development Services Office of Research)

The three listed counties in Ohio with industrial wind turbines currently operating, Hardin, Van Wert, and Paulding, have a combined population of 80,706, and an average population density of 60 people per square mile. The four counties with the majority of turbine placements in the Republic Wind, Emerson Creek Wind, and the proposed Honey Creek Wind projects have a combined population of 230,300 and an average population density of 156 people per square mile. There are nearly three times more people and over double the population density in Seneca, Erie, Huron, and Crawford County compared to Hardin, Van Wert, and Paulding County.

Despite the wide-spread availability of the aforementioned National Research Council's report, neither the Ohio Power Siting Board nor the Ohio General Assembly has ever recognized or adopted rules for cumulative impact. And now the crisis is upon us. This concentration of industrial wind projects is a classic example of how the cumulative impact will overburden an area, turning large swaths of Ohio into heavy industrial zones.

But the point is, there is **nothing** the Ohio Power Siting Board can do to save our area. The OPSB evaluates each project on a separate basis, not in the context of other wind developments, even if the projects are adjacent to one another. If all these projects are approved, it will mean you could literally drive for 30 minutes through North Central Ohio and constantly have 655 foot wind turbines in view. If the developer can meet the requirements for certification by the OPSB, the community is helpless. It has been suggested by some legislators that SB 52 is redundant and unnecessary given the rigorous process of evaluation and approval by the OPSB. Clearly, this is not so. Instead, the inability of the OPSB to address cumulative impact is a giant gaping hole in Ohio's regulatory siting provision. SB 52 fills that gap.

By giving the right of referendum to impacted residents, the people can vote and decide when enough is enough. Denying us that right condemns us to an unthinkable future.

The developers of these pending projects are attempting to insert an industrial size electric generating plant nearly twice the size of the City of Columbus into an area which is home to many Ohioans. I doubt any other industry could propose locating a facility in any area of Ohio which was twice as big as Columbus and not have people who live in the area question the scope and size of the facility. This area of Ohio is a densely populated area compared with the areas where smaller and fewer turbines are currently operating.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today. My wife and I and several hundred of our like-minded neighbors urge you to adopt SB 52. Thank you.