

Proponent Testimony of Walt Poffenbaugh
Huron County, Ohio
SB 234 – Senate Energy and Public Utilities
January 28, 2020

Chairman Wilson, Vice Chairman McColley, Ranking Member Williams and members of the Committee, my name is Walt Poffenbaugh. I live in Norwich Township, Huron County. My family moved to rural Huron County 21 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. Twelve 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

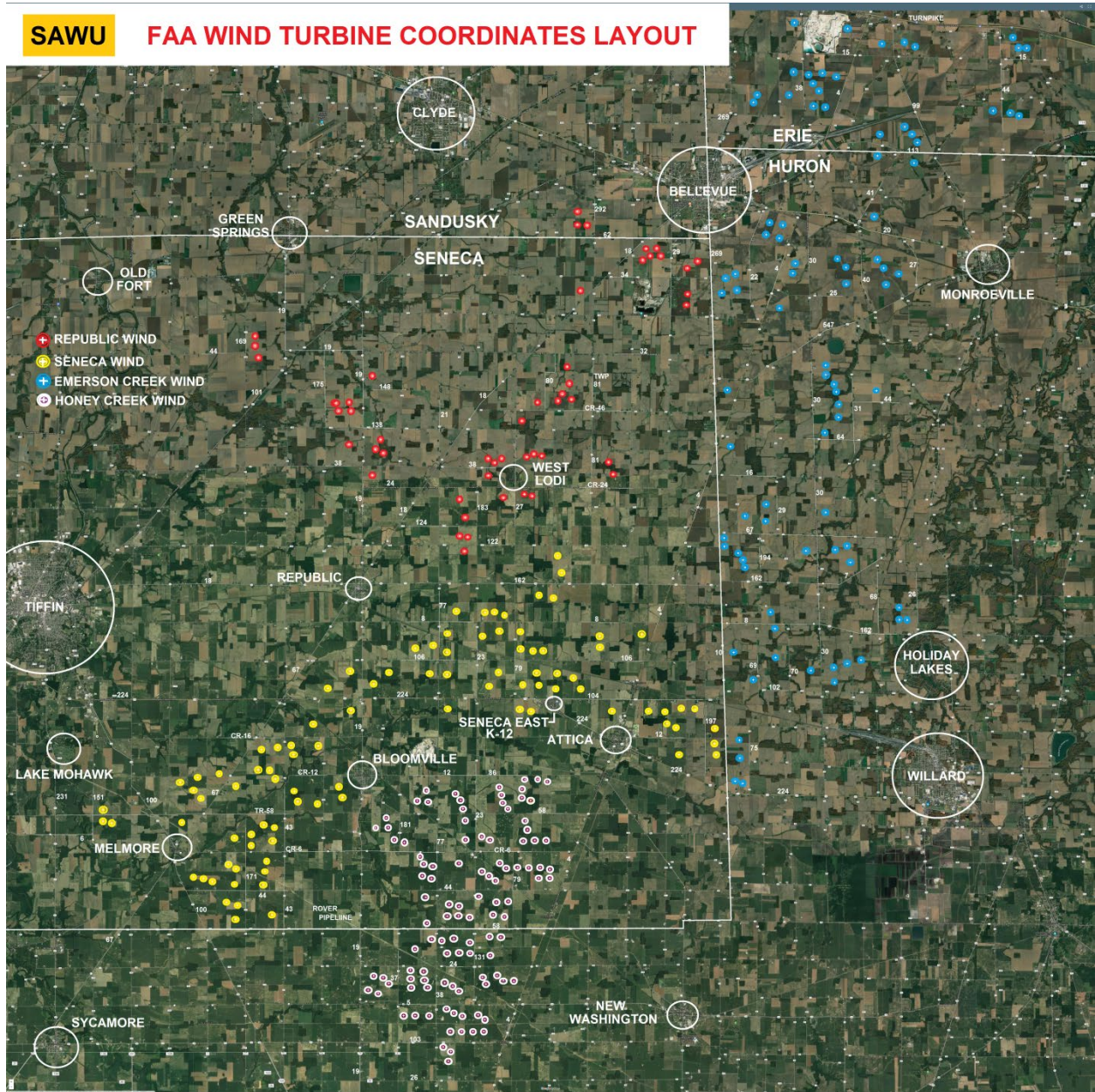
My comments will primarily address the cumulative impact of the Seneca Wind, Republic Wind, and Emerson Creek Wind projects as well as three potential future projects in the immediate area: Honey Creek, Buck Springs and Emerson West. It is my opinion that it is impossible to only discuss Emerson Creek Wind without also taking into account the impact of other currently pending projects. Republic Wind, Seneca 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. I know it is difficult to gain a perspective of just how big an area this is, so allow 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 just nine square miles larger than the area which will be used for the three projects currently before the OPSB. This does not include the three additional potential projects we have become aware of but for which applications haven’t yet been filed.

Imagine an industrial wind turbine area, containing turbines which are 655 feet tall, in an area the size of the City of Columbus, covering a portion of four counties. Please remember that this is just the area wind developers need currently for the three proposed projects. Additional projects will obviously encroach on even more agricultural/residential land. I have included a high-resolution map which details the latitude and longitude locations of the turbines filed with the Federal Aviation Administration

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

for Seneca Wind, Republic Wind, Emerson Creek Wind, and the as yet applied for Honey Creek Wind projects. (See Figure 1)



(Figure 1)

The turbine placements of the three projects currently in the application phase are as follows:

Project	Total Acres	Square Miles	Turbines	Nameplate Generating Capacity/MW	Square Miles per Turbine
Seneca Wind	56,900	88.9	77	212	1.15
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 developers have 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 three counties with the majority of turbine placements in the Seneca Wind, Republic Wind and Emerson Creek Wind projects have a combined population of 188,554 and an average population density of 172 people per square mile. There are over twice as many people and nearly triple the population density in Seneca, Erie, and Huron County when compared to Hardin, Van Wert, and Paulding County.

Despite the wide-spread availability of the aforementioned National Research Council's report, neither the State of Ohio Power Siting Board nor the legislature 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.

But the point is that there is **nothing** the Ohio Power Siting Board can do to save our area. The OPSB evaluates each project on a discrete basis and not in the context of other wind developments. If each developer can meet the requirements for certification, the community is helpless. It has been suggested by some legislators that SB 234 is redundant given the rigorous process of evaluation and approval by the OPSB. Clearly, this is not so. Instead, the inability to address cumulative impact is a giant gaping hole in Ohio's regulatory siting provisions. SB 234 fills that gap.

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

The developers of these pending projects are attempting to insert an industrial electric generating plant nearly 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 as big as Columbus and not have people resistant to the idea. This area of Ohio is a densely populated area when 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 234. Thank you.