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March 19, 2011  
Idaho

## House committee considering moratorium on wind turbine construction

By Mitch Coffman, [www.idahoreporter.com](http://www.idahoreporter.com) 18 March 2011

The House State Affairs Committee got an earful on the issue of wind turbines during a hearing Friday. House Bill 265 proposes a two-year moratorium for those projects not already approved. Rep. Erik Simpson, R-Idaho Falls, introduced the bill. Simpson believes that wind energy isn't a viable resource compared to others and costs more as well.

Testimony on the bill was split fairly evenly with those against the bill falling into two categories: businesses and those with business relationships with them, and farmers/ranchers looking for some supplemental income.

Suzanne Leta Liou, a representative for RES Americas and an opponent of the bill, said this bill would jeopardize her company's wind turbine project in Twin Falls County and others like it. "This bill overrides local authority and local control," adding, "Idaho is a place where we want to do business. To be honest, if this bill was to move forward we would question the decision to be in Idaho."

Scott Vanevenhoven, a member of Idahoans for Responsible Wind Energy and a proponent for the moratorium, believes proper ordinances and guidelines are not in place for local governments to make tough decisions. "These guidelines we currently have are insufficient. We should take this two-year pause and research everything," he said. Vanevenhoven believes it's a state issue and the state should therefore take a more active role in providing rules and regulations for building wind turbines. "The state has given incentives for people to use, so clearly it's a state issue," adding, "Idaho's wind development is radically higher than other states. Is this really a desirable thing for Idaho?"

Errol Jones, a member of the Bonneville County Planning and Zoning Commission, who is also for the moratorium, said at one time as a member of the board he was in favor of wind farms, but now says people need to really sit back and think about the consequences of building them. He also is in favor of some state oversight, not takeover, of the building process. "There is a definite learning curve. The state should take a good look at this process and what the counties have done." He also had a list of things he thinks the state can help with during this process including statewide guidelines for placing windmills, getting the fish and game department involved early, and having a longer timetable for county boards and commissions to study the issue and make sure it's a good decision.

Dr. Louis Morales, also a proponent of the bill, discussed health concerns with wind turbine farms. He believes wind turbines are a substantial health risk and should be



March 18, 2011  
North Dakota

## Rotor and blades fall from Rugby area wind turbine

By: Kevin Bonham, Grand Forks Herald, [www.grandforksherald.com](http://www.grandforksherald.com) 17 March 2011

Industry officials are investigating an accident that occurred this week in which a rotor and blades fell from a tower at the Rugby Wind Power Project near Rugby, N.D.

No one was injured in the incident, which is believed to have occurred sometime during daylight hours Monday, according to Jan Johnson, communications director for Iberdrola Renewables, which operates the 149.1 megawatt wind farm.

“Nobody was in the vicinity when it happened,” she said.

The rotor assembly and three blades are attached to a hub. So, when the rotor became detached, the blades fell, too, Johnson said.

“It’s kind of a unique situation,” she said, “It hasn’t happened before; certainly not in our fleet, and not that I’m aware of anywhere else.”

While Iberdrola has maintenance crews on the farm during normal business hours, the facility is not staffed around the clock. The company monitors wind farms throughout the country from a central technical facility at the company’s headquarters in Portland, Ore.

The company reported the incident to the North Dakota Public Service Commission, which regulates the state’s wind energy industry.

In the meantime, the incident is being investigated by officials from Iberdrola and from Suzlon Wind Energy Corp., wind turbine manufacturer.

“These investigations tend to be very thorough,” Johnson said.

The Rugby facility, which was dedicated in October, includes 71 wind turbines. A portion of the energy produced there is sold to Missouri River Energy Services, based in Sioux Falls, S.D.

The structures at Rugby stand 407 feet tall, from the bottom of the turbine to the top of the highest blade at 12 o’clock.

The S88-2.1 megawatt turbine is designed for medium wind speeds and to withstand extreme conditions, according to Suzlon’s website. The blades were manufactured at Suzlon’s manufacturing facility in Pipestone, Minn.

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March 19, 2011

Opinions, U.S.

## Ann Hornaday reviews 'Windfall'

By Ann Hornaday, The Washington Post, [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com) 18 March 2011

Faucets don't spit fire in "Windfall," making its local premiere Saturday at the Environmental Film Festival. But incendiary water may be the only side effect not associated with wind power in Laura Israel's absorbing, sobering documentary about the lures and perils of green technology.

With the Oscar-nominated "Gasland" (and its flame-throwing plumbing) enlightening viewers on the environmental and public health implications of natural gas drilling, and with nuclear power's reputation in meltdown as a global community turns an anxious gaze toward Japan, some hardy souls may see hope in wind power. After seeing "Windfall," those optimists will probably emerge with their faith, if not shaken, at least blown strongly off course.

"Windfall" takes place in Meredith, N.Y., a once-thriving dairy-farming community of fewer than 2,000 tucked into a bucolic Catskills valley that is teetering between post-agricultural poverty and hip gentrification. When Irish energy company Airtricity offers leases to build windmills on some residents' properties, the deals initially seem like a win-win. A little extra money in the pockets of struggling farmers, an environmentally sound technology, those graceful white wings languorously slicing the afternoon sky — what's not to like?

Plenty, as the concerned residents in "Windfall" find out. Not only do the 400-foot, 600,000-pound turbines look much less benign up close, but research has suggested that their constant low-frequency noise and the flickering shadows they cast affect public health; what's more, they've been known to fall, catch fire and throw off potentially lethal chunks of snow and ice.

Soon Meredith succumbs to drastic divisions between boosters, who see Airtricity's offers as a godsend for the economically strapped community, and skeptics, who see the leases as little more than green-washed carpetbaggery. "Windfall" chronicles the ensuing, agonizing fight, which largely splits lifelong residents and the relatively new "downstaters," who've moved in from Manhattan and want to keep their views and property values pristine.

Using artful collages of maps and signage, a rootsy soundtrack and crisp digital cinematography, Israel provides a vivid backdrop to "Windfall's" most gripping story, the emotionally charged human conflict that results in a genuine cliffhanger of a third act. Wisely letting Meredith's residents speak for themselves, the filmmaker avoids simple good-guy-bad-guy schematics, instead enabling each side to state its case.

Israel, a film editor making her feature debut here, has owned a cabin in Meredith for more than 20 years, a fact never made clear in “Windfall,” which is, nonetheless, filmed with careful, dispassionate distance. In large part, the documentary follows Israel’s process of discovery. Although she wasn’t approached for a lease, she initially supported wind power in the community, she said in an interview. “I wanted a turbine on my property, which motivated me to learn more about it,” she explained. “A lot of the people in the film are illustrating the process I went through, from initial excitement to having it unravel as you find out more about the subject.”

Comparing the situation in Meredith with similar ones in other New York communities, Israel conveys an alarming portrait of small, economically vulnerable towns being cynically targeted by Big Wind — slick, savvy energy companies less interested in the public good than in profits, which are virtually ensured thanks to generous federal and state tax breaks, as well as the deep pockets of investment banks. “It’s not green energy,” notes one observer. “It’s greed.”

Meanwhile, in Meredith, a handful of earnest, common-sense heroes try to separate fact from hype, do the right thing and navigate thorny questions of civic progress by way of small-town democracy. The latter isn’t always pretty, as anyone who has attended a town hall or school board meeting knows. But “Windfall” makes it look exciting, inspiring and, most important, stubbornly enduring. Last year, the Environmental Film Festival helped launch “Gasland’s” grass-roots tour, during which the film pulled the veil from an otherwise opaque subject. With luck, “Windfall” will soon embark on a similar eye-opening journey. Catch it if you can.

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