

## COMMENTS ABOUT WIND ENERGY

My name is Pete Ferrell. I live in Butler and Elk counties at 16218 SE Ferrell Road, Beaumont, Kansas: so does my 91-year-old mother, Isabelle. It is not a coincidence that our address bears our last name. My family has resided here since 1888 when my great grandfather founded our ranch. To say the least, we are not newcomers to the area and I do not wish to ever leave. I hope that my children will someday want to live here as well.

Thank you for the time you are spending in public service. My father, Jack Ferrell, spent over 20 years in public service on local school boards, the Board of Trustees of the Butler County Community College, and working with the State Board of Education. I, too, spent time on the local Community College Board twelve years ago. I know public officials are faced with difficult and demanding issues. I applaud your willingness to hear all views. And I'm glad I live in a nation that encourages open debate.

My family's interest in wind power goes back generations. Prior to being connected to the electric grid in the 1940's, our ranch headquarters was powered by a "Windjammer" (brand name) electrical turbine. It produced direct current power for lights and small appliances in the two ranch dwellings. Furthermore, I have read the diary entries of my grandfather in which he expresses his delight at the installation of water pumping windmills that enabled our ranch to survive the Dustbowl. *Harnessing the wind's energy is part of my family tradition.* The next chapter in this story involves wind farms.

My first exposure to commercial wind farming occurred in **1989** during a visit to the Hawaiian Islands. The largest cattle ranch in the United States is on the big island of Hawaii. Curiously, the ranch I was visiting had large turbines on it. In this gorgeous island paradise, non-renewal sources of energy, like oil, are not available. They are also not acceptable because of their residues. Some other living being on the islands would be adversely affected. If all of us had an island mentality about the planet, we might see things differently.

My perspective on wind resources was enlarged in **1994** when a Fortune 500 company approached me: they wanted me to consider allowing the installation of a commercial size wind farm on my ranch. My first reactions were similar to those expressed by the opposition to this type of project. I, too, was afraid of how it would look, how it might disrupt my ranching operation, and the overall impact it might have upon the landscape. Fortunately for me, the representatives of this company were patient and understanding of my concerns. They took the time and money to educate me on the reality of this endeavor. At their expense, they flew me to see existing windfarm sites in the US.

In 1995, after a year of research and several thousand dollars of my own money in legal and consulting fees, I began working with Oxbow Power Corporation toward development of a commercial scale windfarm on the Ferrell Ranch. The Oxbow project was headed by Dr. Gary Johnson who took early retirement from a tenured position at Kansas State in electrical engineering to devote his life to the exploration of wind energy in Kansas. Dr. Johnson literally wrote the book on wind power: his text is used in many colleges and universities. Coincidentally, it was Dr. Johnson who published a study in November of 1984 that identified the area near Beaumont as a class 5 wind zone. In his 1996 annual report to officials at Oxbow, he confirmed that the site at the Ferrell Ranch had tremendous potential as a commercial wind farm. I gained a definitive and impressive evaluation of my resource. However, in spite of the attractiveness of the site and for reasons unrelated to its quality, Oxbow elected to terminate our lease.

Between 1998 and 2001, I continued to collect wind speed data on my property. During that period, I either approached or was approached by seven different companies. I rejected the offers of six companies because of their unwillingness to negotiate about my concerns. The seventh company, Greenlight Energy, developer of the Elk River Windfarm, has been a breath

of fresh air because of their capacity to answer all my questions about economics and ecology. I tell you this story so you'll understand that I have not reached my decision about wind energy without lengthy and thoughtful consideration. The planning behind my project has great depth to it: I am not part of some gold rush mentality, which has put fear in the minds of many people in the Flint Hills. I have been preparing for this testimony for nine years.

This morning I would like to focus the discussion on **economics, ecology, and individual responsibilities and rights.**

RE: Economics

1. The Kansas legislature has wisely exempted wind farm machinery from inclusion in the tax roles as a way of encouraging renewable energy development within the state. I applaud the foresighted legislators who see the long-term value of this resource. It will help stabilize our state's economy. It's already been suggested in the Wichita paper that the aircraft industry could easily retool to build turbines.
2. Jobs are scarce in rural Kansas. Did you know that seven to nine well-paid technical jobs are created for each 100 MW of energy produced. Even one new job in Beaumont, Kansas would be a significant increase.
3. Land values will be affected ... to the positive. Based on studies completed at operating wind sites elsewhere in the US, property values will increase. The royalties will run with the deed and increase the earning capacity of the parcels affected. The ability to earn money from agricultural activities is enhanced. You know, the wind blows even during a drought.
4. And last, but not least, my family, especially my children, will have a more secure future on the land my great grandfather homesteaded.

RE: Ecology

1. My ability to continue valuable grazing activities, which preserve the ecological integrity of this landscape, will not be impaired. *This is a core issue for me and I have not compromised my standards for this project.* If anything, the wind farm will make it easier for me to continue a family history of good stewardship. I hope to broaden my knowledge of rest-rotation grazing which has enabled me to survive in difficult economic times.
2. The Elk River project could make use of existing roads. This will limit the footprint of this project to less than 2% of the grazing land involved. Furthermore, I have personally witnessed the healing of this landscape after disruptions. In my life, I have seen ten miles of oil field pipeline extracted, four miles of phone cable installed, and I personally installed two miles of livestock water line. In all these cases, the range has fully recovered. If well managed, this landscape is very forgiving. The Elk River team has diligently studied and mapped the project site in order to understand and avoid any sensitive areas.
3. I would remind you that this form of energy is as sustainable as the wind itself. Comparisons to the sins of petroleum and uranium energy are unfounded. Those substances are buried deep underground for a good reason: they are toxic to us! Hopefully, we'll learn to leave them there. The wind, however, is not toxic and is available to us all.
4. 75% of the people in Butler County can see the burn-off tower at the El Dorado refinery out of their back door. Nobody complains about that. Yet when completed, less than 1% of the county's population will be able to see the Elk River Wind Farm from their homes. Fewer than 50 people live within a 75 square mile area surrounding my site. You'll have to intentionally travel to this site to see the windfarm. And when the turbines are installed you'll find that the sunlight will be just as bright, the grass just as green, the water just as clear and the cattle just as fat as any other place in the Flint Hills. Beauty truly is in the eyes of the beholder. I see wind turbines as elegant because of what they represent. What they represent means more to me than how they look. *They represent a cleaner future.*

RE: Landowner responsibilities and rights

1. I believe we earn rights by being responsible. I feel that it is incumbent upon every responsible landowner to become as informed as possible to make a well-reasoned decision about windfarming. This includes paying close attention to all details of a contract so as to limit the disruption of the existing natural productivity of that landscape. To fail to do so is outside the bounds of good stewardship. I feel I have truly performed due diligence on this matter. I'm obviously comfortable with Greenlight Energy: they passed my test, which, if you know me at all, is not easy.
2. My great grandfather is quoted as saying, "there's nothing prettier than a red steer grazing a green pasture ... until you start keeping the books on him." He knew, as I do, the precarious nature of ranching. Therefore, it has been my responsibility, if I wish to live here, to thoroughly examine all the options for making a living off this property. I've looked at oil, coal bed methane, and residential developments. These activities permanently consume valuable assets in one or two generations. They do not qualify as being sustainable. You see, **grass and wind are eternal**. Because these are sustainable activities, *I do believe it is within my rights to earn a living by carefully grazing this land AND by harnessing the wind that blows across it. If you choose to take these rights from me, what else will you take?*
3. Having said that, I understand that it is your responsibility to watch out for the welfare of all citizens of Kansas, not just mine. Do your duties include a national perspective? I believe Kansas could play a valuable role in the responsibility we all have to wean this country off non-renewal forms of energy. Our nation's dependence on foreign oil is at the root of much of the unrest in the world today.
4. Finally, I respectfully remind you that, in this case specifically, I am the citizen who will be most affected by your decision and by the wind farm itself. In stark contrast to many of wind energy's assailants, I actually live on my land, in the Flint Hills. I wish to continue living there. How do my rights compare to the rights of people who don't actually live there? If others say they own the view of my property, please ask them when they took it and what they intend to pay for it.

IN CONCLUSION

In Butler County, the planning board and the commissioners heard six months worth of comments from the public prior to approving the Elk River Windfarm. I watched those public meetings closely. What I observed is a normal response to change. It's called fear. In order to sway public opinion, those who oppose wind energy have successfully used this fear. I'm sure you, too, have seen this as part of a process we all go through. I hope you'll express the courage to look beyond the selfish motives of the detractors. I find it curious that although the Kennedys in Massachusetts say they support wind power, they complain about the possibility of seeing wind turbines five miles out in the bay from their expensive summer resorts. Does this sound familiar?

There are three men standing here with me today: my father, my grandfather, and my great grandfather. I have consulted their legacy and their record. They would support my decision on this matter. They each had to make difficult choices and changes in their respective times. I have to do the right thing in my time as they did in theirs. My ranch will be home to a state-of-the-art project that sets the highest standard for wind farming. I believe it is a project anyone can support in good conscience. Dr. Johnson once reminded me that our state is named after an Indian tribe, the Kansa, or Kaw. I think we are on the verge of discovering something these first Kansans knew about the real value of this place. Perhaps we, too, can become a "People of the South Wind".

Thank you for your time.