

Wind Waste

You've seen people blinded by love, right. They are so infatuated they don't see the other person's flaws that are obvious if only they weren't so googly-eyed. This is exactly what's happened with industrial wind power. Governments everywhere fell so in love with the technology they failed to ask some very important questions like "What happens when the things wear out?"

As more and more cities and states are beginning to discover... giant, worn-out wind turbine blades are a giant, expensive problem. All this is coming to a head because the big blades only last about 20 years and thousands of them are getting to that age now.

The dirty little secret about renewables is they have to be renewed and that involves continuous mining, manufacturing, transportation, and disposal. Wind turbine blades are made of fiberglass and are currently impractical to recycle. They are huge, some of them as long as a football field. Once they become industrial junk, the blades are chopped up into pieces for easier transport. Even after they are cut up, the pieces of the blades are still so big that there are only a few landfills that can dispose of them. But even those landfills don't want the blades because they take up too much space.

This is a huge problem because the deluge of wind turbine blades is only getting started. One study estimates the U.S. will have 728,000 tons of wind blade junk to dispose of in the next 20 years, and it's only going to get worse after that. Continuous improvement of blade technology is resulting in blades being replaced well before their 20-year life span.

Now let's talk money. You won't believe what it costs to tear down one of these things. In Minnesota, Xcel Energy estimates it will cost about \$7.4 million to decommission only 18 turbines at the Palmer Creek facility. That's \$410,000 each.

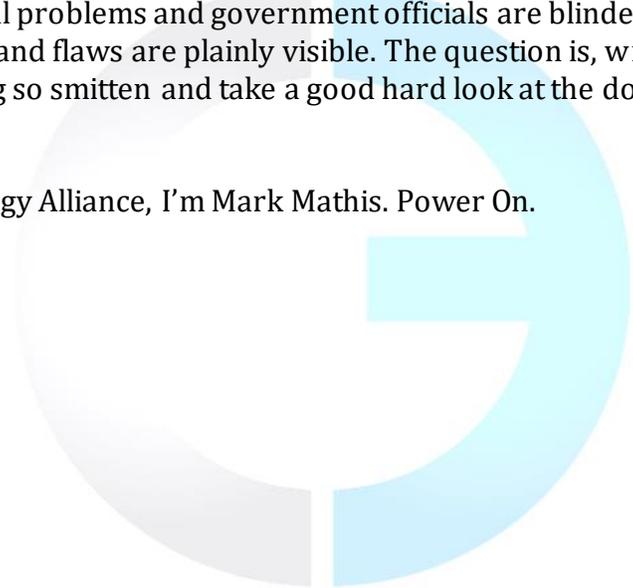
At Xcel's Noble facility the cost is an eye-popping \$532,000 per wind turbine. There's 134 of them. Total price tag... \$71 million bucks. I should mention Xcel will only remove the top four feet of the turbine's foundation. The company will leave behind a massive block of cement that will extend from the four-foot depth to as much as 15 feet deep.

And that brings us to another looming problem. What do states and municipalities do if a wind company goes bankrupt? Who pays the enormous cost of getting rid of all that wind junk? You would think state and local governments would always require bonds to make sure money is available to clean everything up when wind companies go belly up. But, that's not the case.

Many states and cities don't require bonding for wind companies. The same for solar. It's strange, because all states that have oil and natural gas development require those companies to provide bonds.

Why the exception for wind and solar? The answer can be found in those googly eyes. Wind developers, blade manufacturers, lease holders, and activists willfully ignore the disposal problems and government officials are blinded by love. Well... now all the warts and flaws are plainly visible. The question is, will government officials stop being so smitten and take a good hard look at the downsides of industrial wind?

For the Clear Energy Alliance, I'm Mark Mathis. Power On.



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