

Rocky Forge Is About 'Willful Destruction'

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Editor, The News-Gazette:

Yes, Rocky Forge is about climate change.

To begin, attaching wind power in mountains to solar energy as a way to slow down climate change is bogus. Solar is not installed unless it can be sited appropriately. Solar does not kill birds and bats. Solar does not make harmful sounds and vibrations. Installation of solar does not clog streams, destroy forests and ridgelines, require lots of blasting in fragile areas, fragment mountain wildlife habitation and movement.

In addition, 25 industrial turbines - white, moving, lit up and over twice as high as the communication towers - would be visible from every magisterial district in Rockbridge and beyond. Trees can be planted around solar arrays. Turbines in flat country might be interesting relief, but they have no place on the mountains that define our county.

What does address the problems of climate change? Healthy forests and clean water that can

sequester carbon and provide a place for animals and plants to adapt and maintain a base for life's cycle.

Instead, Rocky Forge brings us 200-plus acres of lost carbon sequestration, impaired streams and wetlands, higher risk than average of forest fires and landslides, damage to neighboring national and state forests, as well as, the environmental costs of manufacturing and shipping turbines from Germany, dismantling turbines after 30-year lifespan, and a destroyed forest in need of restoration.

There is no doubt that engineers can build amazing, massive machines in challenging places and that financiers can find clever ways to make money, but do we really want to give up so much for so little?

Because of the safe dollars provided by taxpayers for investors in the Rocky Forge project and flawed Permit by Rule legislation that allows a hasty, ill-conceived process, Rockbridge residents will be subjected to a distressing sacrifice. Apex will find mitigation credits for the environmental

destruction and Botetourt County will receive annual tax benefits in exchange for energy for maybe 7,000 homes though Apex claims up to 20,000 might be possible.

On the other hand, Rocky Forge is not about sacrifice, or even balance. It's about willful destruction. Counting dead birds and bats after the fact is not mitigation. In fact, there is no mitigation that can pay for a fragmented forest, a destroyed ridgeline, lost homes, contaminated water.

Although I will not have to sacrifice my home, or even my viewshed, the cost to our mountain, our water, our residents, and our well being - while contributing to climate change - is painful and far & from a balanced, fair trade. There may be places where industrial wind energy is cost-effective, safe and a hedge against climate change. North Mountain is not one of them.

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