

# Kill rates concern retired engineer

By Paul Schliesmann The Whig-Standard

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A retired computer network engineer has been crunching the latest bird and bat kill numbers from wind turbines on Wolfe Island and he doesn't like what he sees.

"They're very large," said Wayne Gulden, who maintains a website called Wind Farm Realities from his home in Yellow Springs, Ohio.

Adjusted figures provided in the most recent report to the island wind farm owners show 2,327 bats killed in 2010.

The number of birds killed was estimated at 1,207.

Gulden said the bird numbers make the 86-turbine Wolfe Island wind farm the second deadliest in North America. It's owned and operated by TransAlta, based in Alberta.

Gulden has an interest in what happens on Wolfe Island. Ten years ago, he and his wife bought property on nearby Amherst Island, where another wind farm is proposed for construction.

He said he's removed himself from the increasingly rancorous community battle on Amherst to concentrate on overall wind farm policy and examination of how they affect people and wildlife.

What bothers Gulden most is that no one, including government agencies such as the Ministry of Natural Resources, is considering whether the mortality rates are sustainable for the bird and bat species on Wolfe Island.

"Eight raptors killed (in the second half of 2010) doesn't sound like a lot," he said. "My concern in the meantime is the raptors are no longer there. So, of course, the kill rates go down.

"You can't tell me you can cull 2,300 bats out of Wolfe Island and not affect the population."

Gulden argues that even the comparators used to determine whether kill rates at particular wind installations are acceptable appear to be flawed. Invariably, he said, the worst-case facilities are used to set the standard for maximum number of kills.

"They should have a rate that's sustainable," he said. "Does it endanger the overall criteria? That's not even a passing thought. It's absolutely arbitrary."

After analyzing the numbers, Gulden is even skeptical about the claims governments and industry make about how green energy will reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

That's because wind farms rarely generate electricity at more than 30% of capacity.

"At Wolfe Island, they've got the turbines packed too closely together," he said. "They tried to jam too many into there. Wolfe Island has been lower (in generating power) than it should have been.

"I would like them to be effective, but the evidence doesn't point that way."

Personally, Gulden doesn't believe wind turbines are unpleasant to look at. He's mostly concerned about the noise they produce, how that affects humans, and how they're using up wilderness habitat.

"The government is so wedded to this idea of green energy they don't look at the consequences," he said.

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