

June 29, 2015

Dear Lancaster County Planning Department and County Commissioners,

As a member of a family who has farmed in the Hallam area for generations, I ask you to consider zoning regulations that protect the health and safety of community members while still allowing farmers like myself to have wind turbines on their property.

Living in an agricultural area comes with trade-offs. Agricultural activities such as planting, harvesting, spraying, etc create sound and other disturbances. Harvesting wind energy with wind turbines is simply another form of agricultural activity, and one that protects farmers from the volatility of grain prices, weather, and high property taxes.

In many, many other counties Iowa and the Midwest, wind farms exist without any problems in areas with a combination of farmland and acreages. I do not think it is fair for a county health department to limit my ability to produce income from wind turbines when the sound they produce is equal to or lower than the sound produced by other activities that go on in Ag areas on a daily basis.\*

For reference, see the attached table of sound levels of common agricultural activities. What is next? Will the county start to limit when I can run my equipment to harvest my crops?

The sound limits proposed in the current draft of the wind energy zoning regulations for Lancaster County are far too low. They should be raised to a 50dbA daytime/nighttime limit (as they are in almost every other county in Nebraska (and the Midwest). This would allow for farmers to be able to have wind turbines on their property while at the same time protecting the health and welfare of the acreage owners who are already exposed to noise levels higher than this during agricultural activities.

As you can see by the number of letters of support, there are a large number of people and organizations that realize the value of wind energy projects and feel that it should not be treated different than any other agricultural activity.

Sincerely,

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Table 2. Typical sound levels

Sound Levels in dB(A)	General	Agriculture
0	Threshold of hearing (Weakest sound)	
40	Quiet office, Library	
50-60	Normal Conversation	
55-70	Dishwasher	
74-112		Tractor
77-120		Chainsaw
79-89	Riding mower	
80-105		Combine
81-102		Grain dryer
83-116		Crop dusting aircraft
85-106		Orchard sprayer
85-115		Pig squeals
88-94		Garden tractor
93-97		Grain grinding
110	Leaf blower	
110-130	Rock concert	
125	Jet plane at ramp	

Sources: Hearing Loss in Agricultural Workers, National Safety Council, Itasca, IL. League for the Hard of Hearing, New York, NY

Source: <http://extension.psu.edu/business/ag-safety/health/e48>

\* Sound level would be ~100dbA during maximum windspeeds at the turbine