

# THE FREE CENTER

FENNER RENEWABLE ENERGY EDUCATION CENTER / FENNER, NEW YORK

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## NEW REPORT FINDS NO EVIDENCE OF IMPACTS ON PROPERTY VALUES FROM WIND FARM

**Suggests property value effects should take on less importance in siting proceedings**

FENNER, NEW YORK (MAY 24, 2006): The FREE Center, a Fenner (NY) based organization dedicated to renewable energy education and sustainable practices, today released a study examining the impacts on local property values of the Fenner wind farm. Despite persistent claims that all wind farms adversely affect property values, a report by Ben Hoen of the Bard Center for Environmental Policy, finds that property values were unaffected by the installation, in 2001, of a 20 turbine wind farm in the Fenner Township of Madison County, NY.

The report, *Impacts of Windmill Visibility on Property Values in Madison County, New York*, is being released by the Fenner Renewable Energy Education Foundation (FREE), and will be made available via a website hosted by the Alliance for Clean Energy New York (ACE NY). The report's author, Ben Hoen, a graduate student from the Bard Center for Environmental Policy, says, "The likelihood that property values were affected in Madison County is negligible, thereby reducing similar concerns for other communities hosting wind farms."

"Much as we expected," said Donna Griffin, a longtime Fenner resident, wind farm neighbor and FREE Board member, "this study concludes that well-planned wind farms can generate lots of clean power, local tax revenue and still be good neighbors."

High profile proposals for wind farm installations, such as Cape Cod, Massachusetts, have concentrated on the subject of property value effects, where one study projected the effects of the proposal to be \$1.35 billion<sup>1</sup> in reduced property values. The phrase, "The wind farm will ruin my view!" has often been heard at public planning meetings for wind farms. "A ruined view would be translated into home prices, yet few studies of actual property value effects from existing wind facilities exist", added Hoen. New York, with its adoption of the Renewable Portfolio Standard, in 2004, plans to increase the percentage of renewable power produced in the state by 7% (over its current 18%) to reach the goal of 25% renewable energy generation by the year 2013. This could mean as many as 30 new wind farms across the state, the report states, and many states in the Northeast have similar goals for renewable energy use and production

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<sup>1</sup> Haughton, J., D. Giuffre, *et al.* (2004). "An Economic Analysis of a Wind Farm in Nantucket Sound." Beacon Hill Institute at Suffolk University. 2-83. May 1, 2004. Pg. 16.

in their state.

The director of the Bard Center for Environmental Policy, Joanne Fox-Przeworski says, "As the Northeast's wind energy capacity grows, the frequency of clashes between communities and wind farms will likely increase. Understanding the effects of these developments, through empirical studies of existing sites, is crucial."

"Wind power plays a key role in New York's clean energy future. From an environmental perspective, it's a safe source of energy that reduces our dependence on polluting fossil fuels and foreign oil," said Larisa Washburn, program associate of Environmental Advocates of New York. "This study sheds light on a common concern in communities deciding whether or not to build a wind farm and shows that property values are not impacted."

"This study provides valuable information for communities considering wind farm developments", said Carol Murphy, Executive Director of ACE NY. "The Fenner wind farm is a showcase for New York showing how wind energy can bring economic development for rural communities with many positive attributes for local residents while producing pollution free energy."

The study is the first on record to visit each home in the study area and ascertain if visibility of the wind farm is possible, and to what degree. Previous studies<sup>2</sup> have made the assumption that all homes within a certain radius (for instance 5 miles) could see the wind farm, yet this study found that only 33% of the homes in its study area, within 5 miles, could see the turbines. In addition to visibility, distance to the nearest turbine was calculated. The author used this data to ascertain if property value data, obtained from the Madison County Tax Office, was uniquely affected by the turbines. The report finds there to be no measurable effect on values. These findings held even when concentrating on homes that were within a mile of the turbines and those that sold in 2001, immediately following the announcement and construction of the wind farm. Hoen recommends further study of this issue at other sites around the country, and makes specific recommendations for policy makers based on his findings.

The report will be made available through the ACE NY website [www.aceny.com](http://www.aceny.com).

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*The Fenner Renewable Energy Center is a grass-roots organization recently formed to educate the public on the benefits of renewable energy and other sustainable practices. It has created an informational kiosk for visitors to the Fenner wind farm, and is raising funds to build a LEED-certified energy education center on the wind farm site in Fenner, NY.*

*The Alliance for Clean Energy New York's mission is to promote the use of clean, renewable electricity technologies and energy efficiency in New York State, in order to increase energy diversity and security, boost economic development, improve public health, and reduce air pollution.*

*Environmental Advocates of New York is the state's government watchdog, holding lawmakers and agencies accountable for implementing policy that protects natural resources and safeguards public health. The nonprofit organization is a 501(c) (3) and is the New York State affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation. For more information call 518.462.5526 or visit [www.eany.org](http://www.eany.org).*

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<sup>2</sup> For Example: Sterzinger, G., F. Beck, *et al.* (2003). "The Effect of Wind Development on Local Property Values." Renewable Energy Policy Project. 1-77. May 2003.