Lessons from Michigan’s Windfarms

Michigan Association of Planning
September 27, 2017

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Why this research?

- Investigate Gratiot & Huron County claims of farmland preservation
- Understand why such different experiences
- C.S. Mott Grant: share those lessons with communities so that wind respects local community values
2014 Farmland Survey

- All owners of land assessed for agriculture
- 14 townships
  - 9 with windfarms
  - 5 without
- 1,210 responses (72% response rate)
- Funded by Dow Fellowship
2016 Community Survey

- Owners of land assessed ag or residential
- 10 townships with windfarms
- 2,013 responses (53% response rate)
- Funded by C.S. Mott Foundation
Data about the negative impacts

- Views on **noise, visual impact, property values** roughly 50/50
  - Financial stake = rosier view
    - OR
    - no financial stake = more soured view
  - **BUT STILL SPLIT OPINIONS**

- Most (72%) don’t see **human health** impacts, but some do

- Majority (70%) don’t think it’s **divided the community**
  - Even in some pretty contentious projects
Data about the positive impacts

• Most (78%) see **job creation** with caveat about types of jobs

• Majority (60%+) haven’t seen changes to **roads, townships services, county services, or local schools**
  - Despite pretty substantial payments
  - Likely because of how money being used: plug holes, do more of same

• Landowner payments linked to substantial increase in **on-farm investment** (2x neighbors, control) and increase in **succession planning**
Overall drivers of attitudes

• Direct compensation
• Being within earshot of turbines
• Attitudes about process, wind developer
• Type of land owned
  o secondary vs. primary residence
  o farmland / rental property only
What lessons do I draw?

• If goal is for substantial residential development or growth of tourism, wind may not be right
  o These landowners less likely
  o Some may be deterred from

• If goal is to sustain agriculture, wind can fit
  o Farm diversification & succession planning
  o Keeping young people on the farm/in town
  o Adds to the property tax base
  o Siting on property lines takes little land out of production
    • Compatible with PA 116
What my research suggests on zoning

• Have an open & transparent process

• Participating vs. non-participating landowners

• Noise, flicker analysis

• Decommission plan/financial assurance
Invite me to your community

- Grant from C.S. Mott Foundation covers my expenses—all you need to do is invite me

- Aim: to provide evidence-based account of experiences across the state

- I can give a presentation, or just answer questions

- Time-limited offer: grant ends in November!
Thoughts on solar

- Overall, 89% support
  - Compared to 83% for wind

- Visual impacts much more limited (drive-by)
  - But support structure isn’t pretty
  - Screening possible

- Isn’t compatible with farmland preservation
  - Good for marginal ag land; Brownfield, urban lots

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6p7hp_cbwU
The CLOSUP Wind Project

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