Lessons Learned from MI’s Windfarms

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Why this research?

• Investigate Gratiot & Huron County claims of farmland preservation

• Understand why such different experiences
2014 Farmland Survey

- All owners of land assessed for ag
- 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**
Noise

Turbines create noise pollution

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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
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<tr>
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- Views on noise, visual impact, property values roughly 50/50
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**BUT STILL SPLIT OPINIONS**

- Most don’t (72%) see 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
Tax Benefits

$2.749 Million to county gov’t in Huron County in 2015

Turbines’ effect on county services

- Greatly improved
- Somewhat improved
- Neither
- Somewhat worsened
- Greatly worsened

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- Landowner payments linked to substantial increase in on-farm investment (2x neighbors, control) and increase in succession planning
Farm Investment

Investments over 5 years: 2009-2013

- Non-windfarm: $187k
- Unpaid neighbors: $180k
- Neighbors in pool: $193k
- Turbines: $449k

Categories:
- Home
- Outbuildings
- Drainage/Irrigation
- Equipment
Farm Succession

% that have farm succession plan

<table>
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<th>Category</th>
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<td>Unpaid neighbors</td>
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<td>Neighbors in pool</td>
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Overall drivers of attitudes

• Direct compensation

• Type of land owned
  o secondary vs. primary residence
  o farmland / rental property only

• Being within earshot of turbines

• Attitudes about process, wind developer
What Happened with Huron Wind?

• Previous experiences (some good, some bad)
  o Many different wind developers in Huron County
  o Tax table changes a huge concern

• Turbine fatigue: “we’ve done our part”

• County voting = lots of heterogeneity
  o Not all farmers/farming families
  o Yeas: 26% - 54%
  o Turnout: 9% - 61%

• Those who cared, voted
What’s the Lesson?

- Windfarms = economic development proposition
  - Compatible with ag
  - Not with residential growth, tourism

- Indirect economic benefits not felt by average landowner

- Business models that directly pay more landowners keep the peace

- Wind developers, local officials need to act transparently
The CLOSUP Wind Project

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