

Wind farm is a great idea

As Bob Dylan would say, “The answer, my friend, is blowin’ in the wind.”

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Baryonyx Corp., of Houston, wants to put several 500-foot tall turbines 10 miles off of the South Padre Island shore, as was first reported in Saturday’s Monitor.

In the story, the Texas General Land Office says that the turbines could power as many as 600,000 homes. The article also states that Texas schools would receive a share of the profits generated by the windmills. There’s a chance that the wind farm could possibly create local jobs — someone has to build and maintain the turbines, after all.

Sounds like a winner to me.

There are, of course, detractors to this proposed wind farm, and their concerns should be heard. Some argue that the windmills would be an eyesore, that wildlife could be harmed by the turbines or that property values on South Padre Island could plummet. All are reasonable protests.

However, with the wind farms being placed 10 miles from shore, would beachgoers really be able to see them? At a distance of 10 miles, the turbines would probably be just a speck on the horizon, even if one is looking out from the top floor of a hotel. If the windmills were closer to shore or were somehow more visible, I think we would eventually get used to them anyway. After all, giant cell phone towers and water towers make up the landscape of cities across the nation, and no one seems to mind. In time, I think a windmill could even be as common as a telephone poll as the United States (hopefully) moves toward increased use of renewable energy. Besides, the sight of the wind farm’s massive propellers cutting through the air would be pretty cool if you ask me.

Some environmental activists complain that the wind farm could kill birds, which might be true. But if a few seagulls — or rats with wings, as I like to call them — die from flying into the turbines, is it really much of a loss? Surely more seagulls would die from the effects of global warming if authorities decided not to install the wind farm. Our cars run over animals every day, and no one seems to care that carcasses are strewn all over the roads. In Saturday’s article, General Land Office spokesman Jim Suydam said that studies had shown that migratory birds fly at higher elevations than the turbines, so annoying seagulls would likely be the only possible victims. Fine by me.

My only concern with a wind farm in the Gulf of Mexico would be whether or not the turbines would be hurricane-resistant, an issue that was also brought up by a few readers on The Monitor’s Web site. Surely the engineers have designed the windmills to take a beating from the elements, but could the turbines withstand a Category 5?

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Would the machines intended to help fight global warming be destroyed by storms intensified by the already apparent consequences of climate change? Talk about irony.

There will always be downfalls to any new technology, but if you ask me, the path toward energy independence and the opportunity to stave off global warming is worth possibly sacrificing a few birds or fish, or even alienating some island property owners. The risks of a potential wind farm off of the coast of South Padre Island seem to be far outweighed by the gains.

I guess Bob Dylan really is a genius after all.