

Lincoln Ridge Farms

est 1919

January 29, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

We are 4th generation owners/operators of Lincoln Ridge Farms, est 1919, in Van Wert County, Ohio and soon to become recognized as a 'Century Farm'. We, along with our neighbors and many outstanding and long established farms in Van Wert and Paulding County, leased our wind rights to Iberdrola Renewables and are a proud member of the Blue Creek Wind Farm. We respect our heritage and know our forefathers would be supportive of our actions. We are writing this to share our wisdom and experience and urge you to reject further complications to wind farm siting and roll back property line set backs from 2014.

Let's go back in time a minute. I was present in Columbus on August 23, 2010 in the audience when the Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) issued the certificate to Iberdrola Renewables to proceed with construction in our county. At the conclusion, exuberance was expressed by everyone present including the OPSB! I felt the 'process' we (Ohio) put our potential developers through was extensive, thorough and complete. I think Iberdrola did also. In fact they probably felt so good about wind farm development in Ohio that they not only proceeded with the Blue Creek Wind Farm but also invested in infra-structure for future developments in our county. I think the process protected the best interests of the majority. We have kept an open mind about the process even though a wind turbine (#19) was proposed for construction on our farm by Iberdrola – but was one of seven nixed by the OPSB during review, even though placement complied with and exceeded previous guidelines at the time. But, as a landowner and citizen, we still benefit greatly from the Blue Creek Wind Farm just like the citizens of Van Wert County.

If anyone is concerned by the noise a wind turbine, we should be asked because of our daily, 'first-hand' experience of living near a wind turbine located behind our home. We do not call it noise – we call it 'sound' that you soon become accustomed to and only hear occasionally. We refer to the turbine as 'our gentle giant', and as I write this, I'm looking at it now out our window.

In 2013 we hosted two busloads of students, faculty and staff from Ohio State University at our farm. I wish you could have been here to experience the excitement! These students represent not only one of the greatest land grant universities in the country that has committed to wind energy, but also the next generation – the future of our country. While here, they toured the Blue Creek Wind Farm in their study of renewable energy. During the program everyone observed the constant noise from highway US Route 30 that runs through our farm but none from the wind turbine. With a southeast wind the turbine was spinning briskly towards all of us but could not be heard. Instead, it was generating clean energy, revenue for not only the landowner but also tax revenue for the entire community. It is the best thing that has happened to our county in our lifetime!

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Our farm also grows fresh produce that we sell at a farm market in Van Wert and in Fort Wayne. Let me tell you what we hear from our customers – they want to know where their food comes from and that it was grown in an environmentally respectful manner. It's the same thing with energy. Big businesses are committed to using renewable energy which is driving down their energy costs, and giving their customers the peace of mind they want. We have learned that companies like Amazon, Google and Facebook demand renewables, primarily wind, as part of their energy portfolio. Ever wonder why wind turbines are pictured frequently in the background of many national ads? We have the same opportunity in Van Wert County as our officials market our newly certified 'mega site' for economic development to a national audience with the nearby Blue Creek Wind Farm clearly in the background. Not only will Van Wert benefit but also the entire state sending a progressive message. Help us keep the ball rolling!

Anyone interested in expanding jobs and investment in Ohio is welcome to our farm to hear and see for themselves – especially elected officials in other parts of the state that are considering anti-job laws that would undo the policies that led to the huge investment in our community. You can cruise right up to our farm on historic Lincoln Highway and catch a glimpse of our heritage and our future – with our wind turbines!

I understand that we currently have a major policy barrier that blocks further wind farm growth in our community – property line setbacks. As I understand, during the proceeding today, additional regulations are proposed to further hinder the siting of wind farms. These are not warranted. Wind farm developers should not be punished by more regulations. Iberdrola Renewables, our developer, has 'stepped up to the plate' and addressed all concerns in a timely and professional way, in addition to becoming a great corporate citizen in our community. We commend them and call them friends.

I've learned and reinforced a lot of things from our heritage – that dark hair turns grey, that 42 years of marriage takes compromise, our love and care of the land, to respect our leaders and forefathers, the importance of our State and community and our nation – the importance of working together for the betterment of all.

In conclusion I've also had many experiences in life including serving 6 years in the Ohio National Guard – even being fired upon. All of us want things better for our next of kin and wind energy is a part of that. We are all aware of the increased volatility in the world and our nation, including grain markets, fuel prices and the stock market. Stability has always been part of good management – it's just good common sense. We will see cheap grain prices, high oil and revenue shortfalls at our local schools again. Wind energy is a part of the solution.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jeff & Cathy Thomas
Lincoln Ridge Farms