

## Guest Opinion: Wind Over Coal

Written by Elisha Smith

Monday, 19 December 2011 14:52

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By Tom Means, [tommeans@cfra.org](mailto:tommeans@cfra.org) , Center for Rural Affairs

Wind power is the future. It's the most cost-effective source of renewable energy, and is starting to undercut fossil fuels. Power from conventional coal costs \$68 per megawatt-hour, while wind power in high resource areas cost \$65 per megawatt-hour.

Supplies of coal and oil dwindle each day, but there will always be wind. And since wind will always be there, it isn't subject to the type of supply-side market fluctuations that exist for fossil fuels.

Moreover, coal has serious underlying environmental implications. The combustion of coal is required for it to be used for energy, and this combustion releases multiple tons of carbon dioxide and other gases, which contribute to respiratory diseases and climate change.

Combustion of coal exceeds both natural gas and crude oil in its emissions. Although some of these emissions can be reduced through technology, they are proven to create serious health problems in areas where they are emitted excessively.

The only environmentally unfriendly thing about wind is its effect on birds and their migration. Cars, glass, cats, and pesticides all make far greater contributions to bird mortality than windmills. Wind companies are working to further minimize this impact.

Global energy consumption is on the rise, wind power even more so. Thirty-five percent of all new U.S. generating capacity added in the last 4 years was wind. The energy, jobs and environmental benefits of wind hold great promise, not just for the rural Midwest and Great Plains, but for all of America, rural and urban alike.

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