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THE REAL ECONOMICS OF THE INCREASINGLY COMPETITIVE WIND POWER INDUSTRY

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As if the [2010 BP Debacle](#) and myriad coal mining conundrums were not enough to rein in renewable energy skeptics, today's Boston Herald features an [article by Jay Fitzgerald](#), writing in opposition to the additional sea-based wind farms proposed for Massachusetts. In it, Fitzgerald cites "other experts" who believe that offshore wind will always be "more expensive" than traditional fossil-fuel energy sources.

And, there are similar "reporters" coast to coast who continually confound their readers with twisted facts and incomplete research. From Boston to Los Angeles and from Chicago to Houston, the pages allotted to stories accentuating the "higher costs" of renewable energy outnumber those that clarify the widespread economic benefits of renewable energy.

In light of the new year upon us, I'd like to offer reporters a more realistic economic analysis of wind power, with the hope that they may choose to adopt a more contemporary view of the new energy economy.

[Carl Safina](#), one of the world's leading marine scientists, whose body of work spans over 30 years, writes in [The Washington Post](#) on December 21, 2010, "U.S. leadership on climate change and energy innovation is very much about national security, patriotism, and rebuilding the economy. The nation that owns the energy future will own the future."

[Mark Z. Jacobson](#), a Stanford University professor and the Director of the University's Atmosphere and Energy Program, co-authored in 2001 a Science Magazine article entitled, "Exploiting Wind Versus Coal." Jacobson reported then that when the health and environmental costs of coal-based energy are calculated, "the total price for coal-based energy..." ranges from "...\$0.055 to \$0.083 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh)." Interesting, since the U.S. Department of Energy reports that as of 2008, top performing wind farms in areas with excellent wind resources had costs averaging only \$0.059 cents per kWh, a price clearly competitive with, if not far less than, the costs of coal.

So apples to apples, wind power projects don't cost more than the polluting, all-too-familiar energy sources we've come to accept, if only because until recently, American consumers have had few options.

We need more reporters awakening to the reality that if the U.S. is to regain its economic might, transitioning to a more diversified energy portfolio will be an essential component of recovery. To build the robust economy Safina points to, the once elusive, intangible benefits of wind power will have to be embraced as the powerful national assets that they are!

Namely, increased wind power construction replaces the need for new coal plants. For over a half century, existing coal plants have altered the American landscape and the American psyche by collectively:

- 1) compromising the pH balance of lakes (acid rain);
- 2) elevating mercury concentrations in fish;
- 3) aggravating and/or causing respiratory illnesses, including lung cancer, asthma, heart disease, and black lung disease;
- 4) generating poisonous coal mine slag that contaminates drinking water, and;
- 5) obliterating forests and hillsides in communities where Mountain Top Removal mining is still, inexplicably, allowed.

Lisa Jackson of the Environmental Protection Agency has reported that the U.S. government has paid out \$35 billion, since 1973, to cover just the medical expenses of coal miners with black lung disease. This is just one component of the wildly under-reported

health costs resulting from the coal mining industry. So, while the benefits of wind power and other increasingly competitive sources of renewable energy may still elude some, the hard-core, rock-solid facts relating to the mining and burning of coal are indisputable, and this is what reporters and American consumers need to know.

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Source for wind cost

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Thanks.

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