



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on September 29, 2009

## Europeans Blown Away by Govt-Funded Wind Farms

Between 500 and 1,000 protesters gathered last weekend at Mont-Saint-Michel in France to demonstrate against plans to build a wind farm along the Normandy coast. They say it would be a useless eyesore disfiguring the bay area.

The [European Platform Against Windfarms](#) (EPAW), along with four other environmental groups, organized the event "to denounce the massacre of our national and cultural heritage by the wind farm scourge." Though protestors hailed from France, Britain, Belgium, Holland, and Italy, the event received very little media coverage.



EPAW is an alliance of organizations from 18 European countries, both members and non-members of the European Union, with supporters in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Australia. Founded in 2008, the group says its aim is to oppose taxpayer-funded wind farms. It calls the projects "state vandalism" because of their damaging social, economic, and environmental effects.

This past weekend's demonstration was staged at one of France's most beloved landmarks and tourist destinations, Mont-Saint-Michel. "The wind industry will distort this Unesco world heritage site. Visible over 20 miles, these turbines would peak at 225 meters (approximately 738 feet) on the ridges bordering the bay shores," explains Jean-Louis Butre, EPAW chairman, as quoted on the [event website](#). The top spire of Mont-Saint-Michel rises to 170 meters (about 557 feet), and protestors argue the turbines would ruin the view of the site from both land and sea as well as the view from the world-famous landmark. "The wind industry is neither viable, liveable nor fair," he said, calling the proposed project waste of resources and a massacre of the French landscape. Event attendees carried banners accusing government officials of opportunism with such messages as "Mr. Sarkozy, your slot machines devastate the country," "Our country is not for sale," and "When operators become predators." Others called the turbines "useless, expensive and harmful."

Another group that helped to organize the event, the [Federation Environnement Durable](#) (FED), or the "Federation for Environmental Sustainability," has identified 11 similar projects planned by the European Union in France. In May, [EPAW petitioned the European Union](#) to place a moratorium on all planned wind projects, arguing that the costs of wind energy far outweigh its advantages. The letter explained that although EPAW supports effective renewable energy proposals, wind projects are not proven to be reliable. EPAW says that government funding and pressure from financial and ideological interest groups are the only reasons the wind industry can function. Their letter argued that wind farms degrade the environment, contribute only insignificantly to the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub>, involve expensive transmission system upgrades, and "devour colossal amounts of public money," creating an artificial market. EPAW went on to request that the European Union commission an independent study to evaluate the effect of wind farms on carbon savings and the economic, environmental and social impact



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they have on their surroundings.

The letter was [answered in July](#) by Matthias Ruete, the Director General for Energy and Transport, who refuted EPAW's scientifically based claims against wind energy with citations from the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) and a report from the [European Commission's Strategic Energy Review](#). Though Ruete acknowledged the importance of maintaining environmental integrity around wind farms, he dodged the issue by claiming it is the responsibility of local authorities to consult with necessary stakeholders in regard to these aspects of individual wind projects.



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