

February 15, 2019

Re: HB2273

Dear Mr. Chairman,

As Director of the Sunflower Soaring Foundation and an active pilot, please accept this testimony in support of airport setbacks for windmill developments in Kansas.

The Sunflower Soaring Foundation is a qualified 501c3 that owns and operates the Sunflower Gliderport near Hutchinson KS. Our purpose is to provide a place for the public to learn about and experience soaring, develop amateur athletes by hosting regional, national and international soaring competitions, and administer scholarships for youth to pursue soaring. Windmills and wind farms present a significant hazard to our ability in achieving these purposes.

First, there is the physical obstacle, above the ground, that the windmill presents. The FAA has specific requirements for obstacle free zones around public use airports. Many airports in Kansas are private use, including Sunflower Gliderport, which don't have the same protections. It is up to state and local governments to develop setbacks that will protect obstacle free access to all airports. A 3-mile setback should adequately address this hazard.

Second, the windmills produce hazardous rotational vortices that can make it difficult to control an aircraft close to the ground. (Reference KTRAN KU-13-16.) The study analyzed existing windmills near Rooks and Pratt airports, and found that under certain wind conditions, the wake vortices from the windmills presented a high hazard to airplanes using these two airports. Windmills that are more in line with an airport's runways and with the prevailing wind, present a high hazard during all wind conditions.

The following photo shows the wake hazard presented by windmills.



The proposed 3-mile minimum setback may not adequately protect against this hazard. The language of HB2273 is not specific enough. Runways have length, and their ends can be significantly farther away from the center of the airport. **The Foundation requests additional language to paragraph b(2), to include the end of each runway in calculating the setback distance. The Foundation also requests increasing the setback to 5 miles or more for an area within 15 degrees either side of the extended runway centerline.**

Soaring is a specific form of flying that uses the energy of the atmosphere to sustain the aircraft aloft, flying for several hours and traveling hundreds of miles. However, because success is dependent on the weather conditions, and those conditions can change rapidly in Kansas, glider pilots are constantly maintaining watch on a safe place to land. The farm fields of Kansas provide options for pilots to end their flights safely. Even powered aircraft sometimes need to use a field for an emergency landing.

The third hazard windmills and wind farms present to airplanes is the elimination of safe places to land in an emergency. **It is imperative that existing grass runways and private airports be provided protection through setbacks, so that they might continue to be suitable emergency landing areas for gliders and airplanes.**

On behalf of the users of the Sunflower Gliderport, thank you for considering this testimony.

Respectfully,

Andrew Peters  
Director, Sunflower Soaring Foundation