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Film examines drawbacks of wind turbines

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By KRIS REILLY, Editor

YUCCA VALLEY • Wind energy farms may sound environmentally friendly. Nettie Pena's documentary film "They're Not Green" aims to show that they're anything but.

The one-hour film was shown last Saturday night at the Yucca Valley Community Center in an event hosted by the Alliance for Responsible Energy Policy and the Homestead Valley Community Council.

The issue is relevant to Lucerne Valley, as 28 wind turbines are planned for the mountains northwest of town. The film shows interviews with people who live near wind farms, and they say their negative consequences go far beyond the effects on views and property values.

One man who lived near a turbine that caught fire said that firefighters can do little or nothing when the turbines burn because they are so tall. He said he inhaled so much toxic smoke from the burning fiberglass that his coughing resulted in hernia surgery. He also said the company that owned the turbines refused to pay his medical bills.

Other residents spoke of the strobe effect that the windmills create inside their houses as they intermittently block sunlight during the day as well as the flashing red lights that go off during the night.

A scientist interviewed in the film said thousands of birds are killed each year by windmills, and many other problems were examined. Furthermore, the film asserts that the amount of energy provided by these turbines is relatively minuscule.

Pena, who has worked as an assistant film editor at NBC News and Paramount Studios, has been making documentary films since attending UCLA as a graduate student. The destruction of the 1992 Los Angeles riots inspired her to try to improve society, and she became an inner-city math teacher.

Pena said she moved from Los Angeles to Palm Springs three years ago and the windmills "were right in my face." She took her camera to a city council meeting where citizens protested new wind farm developments, and thus "They're Not Green" was born.

Pena spoke after the screening, as did Jim Harvey of the Alliance for Responsible Energy Policy. Both of them are supportive of rooftop solar energy, which does not destroy desert environments and can help people lower their energy costs.

Harvey spoke about AB 811, a state law that makes it easier for homeowners to get low-interest loans for rooftop solar installation. The funding for this program comes from municipal bonds sold by local governments, Harvey said. He's hopeful San Bernardino County will enact an AB 811 program.

Pena said she would like to eventually show "They're Not Green" in Lucerne Valley. Visit web.me.com/thrnotgreen to view portions of the film.

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