

**Museum on Main Street, Smithsonian Institution**  
**Stories: Yes | Student Digital Storytelling Project**  
**The Future of Farming in DeKalb County, Illinois: Wind and Solar Farming**

Dave Halverson: I grew up in the farm machinery business, always wanted to farm.

Don Halverson: [0:16] We actually started farming on this farm in 1973, and as we progressed through the years, we've gained more acres and the opportunity for the wind farms came along, and when you look at the farm economy and the return per acre for having the wind farms there, that's a better return than I'll ever get from growing corn or beans or otherwise.

Don Halverson: [0:45] It's free power off of mother nature, and I mean, we've got wind farms, we've got a solar farm going up on our farm, there's other farms in the County building solar farms, the windmills they're nothing new.

Don Halverson: [1:04] My grandpa had a windmill at his place and it pumped water for him every day for the cattle. I can guarantee around here, if you go out on these hills out back, yep we have plenty of wind yearround. There's a lot of people that don't wanna see 'em in their backyard. There's the people that all the geese fly into 'em and you know, the birds are dead under 'em in there. We've had our windmill seven years?

Don Halverson: [1:33] Seven or eight years at least and I've yet to find a dead bird laying out in the field. No, our power actually goes onto the grid and it may be going to St. Louis. It could be going to Wisconsin. It's, they decide where it's gonna go and it's whoever needs the power. When these were going up, everybody that was part of it was for it.

Don Halverson: [2:03] There was very few that were, I don't want it in my backyard, you know, we call 'em NIMBYs, not in my backyard, and I'm sure there's people that, you know, I don't want it in my yard. Well, they had to build them so far away that it wasn't in your yard. It was on the other person's property and, I mean the windmills were actually built further away than what I could build a hog building, close to those houses.

Don Halverson: [2:40] Now, which one would you rather have, a windmill there or 3,000 pigs? People don't think about that, but yeah, I mean, there's zoning for this and zoning for that. Well, I'd rather have a windmill in my backyard than I would a hog building.

Dave Halverson: [2:56] They brought our windmills from Florida. They shut 'em down after storm calmer or something, it's all controlled from Florida.

Don Halverson: [3:06] I mean, for one windmill sitting on an 80 acre chunk, you're maybe an acre and a half with the roadway and the platform and everything. I farm right up to it. I plant corn within five feet of the base of the windmill, at this time. Yeah, so, I mean, it's really not been a loss for us and it's just solar panels, I mean, they're putting 'em on roofs of houses as

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long as that roof faces the South, and it's one more time that we don't have to burn a fossil fuel. We don't have to burn coal, you know, it's alternative energy and we need to be looking at that.

Dave Halverson: [3:50] That coal is gonna run out and I'd like to go out and see how big that hole is now. Cause they've been hauling coal out of there for years. This is something we get for nothing. Wind, solar, the sun comes out.

Don Halverson: [4:06] Any alternative fuel sources, we gotta look at, they're saying that the reflection in that will interfere with air traffic travel, it'll disorient the birds and this one is only 35 acres. That's 35 acres of black panels that reflect the sun. I mean, it's a revenue generator. If built generates revenue with the construction, cause there's nobody building houses. I'm hoping that people will realize, and you know, like a 30-acre or even an 80 acre solar farm.

Don Halverson: [4:46] We need to look at it that, we're gonna run out of our fossil fuels and that it is a green energy. It is something that we get for free. I mean, our nuclear plants are getting rather old and they're gonna need to be shut down, decommissioned and redone. I'm not sure that I want that power in my backyard all the time too. I think they'll always be some that are gonna fight it, but it is another industry that we need, in the State of Illinois itself.