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Most government agencies that oversee wind farms don't consider low-frequency sound when measuring noise levels. But Salt said they most definitely should, adding that based on what he's learned, it's insane to site turbines less than 2 kilometers, or about 1.3 miles, from someone's home.

"The auditory science community has been asleep at the wheel," he said.

Dr. Robert Dobie, an ear, nose and throat physician and clinical professor at University of California, Davis, doesn't see it that way. Dobie served on the industry panel that assessed health risks last year. He said the scientific literature is clear about sound's effect on the ear, and wind turbine noise is no different.

"What debate?" Dobie wrote in an e-mail. "I do not consider it to be a high priority and would not like to see my tax dollars spent on this when there are much more important issues in medical research."