

Wind farm takes next spin

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Hearing set for tower permit.

Wind is Geronimo Wind Energy's fuel.

As a result, a request for a special permit to erect a meteorological tower south of Gothenburg is a big step, according to Geronimo director of development Charlie Daum.

On Monday, the Dawson County Commissioners set a Sept. 1 public hearing date for the permit the company needs to build a 197-foot tower seven miles east and north of Farnam.

"We need to know how hard the wind blows to optimize our turbine layouts and selection and how to price our power," Daum said Tuesday.

The temporary tower would measure sustainable wind for one to two years.

Daum said completion of the \$150-to-\$200-million wind energy farm, planned along 12,000 acres on the southern edge of Dawson County, is a slow process.

"It's hurry up and wait," he said.

Company officials sealed a deal to lease affected land from 40 property owners last November.

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If Geronimo receives the permit and builds the tower, Daum said environmental studies of the area will follow.

Special attention will be paid to natural features of the land as well as studies of creatures in the area like birds and bats.

"It's important to understand migratory patterns and whether or not there are endangered or protected species," he explained.

Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and Fish and Wildlife officials will help Geronimo define the scope of the studies so habitat is not impacted.

"We want to be mindful of anything that could be an issue," Daum said.

The next step will be obtaining permits from state officials and power-purchase agreements from utilities.

Construction will then begin.

Landowners will be paid during construction of the tower with annual payments beginning once the farm is operational.

Daum said Dawson County was chosen by the Edina, MN-based company because of its strong wind resources, the number of property owners willing to be part of the project and transmission infrastructure already in place.

Once operational, he said between 100 and 200 megawatts of power will be produced.

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