

Another wind farm planned

Pendleton facility would generate 125 megawatts

By Erik Schetzlag
The Associated Press

Wind farm developer US Wind Force has announced plans to seek a permit to build 50 turbine generators on Jack Mountain in Pendleton County, its second project in West Virginia.

The project called Liberty Gap Wind Force would have a total generating capacity of 125

megawatts, according to a filing made with the state Public Service Commission late Wednesday. An undated brochure on the company's Web site said the turbines would be up to 400 feet tall and built along a 6.5-mile ridgeline.

"This project brings employment, tax revenue and tourism to the area in an environmentally friendly way and will benefit the people of the County for

generations," according to the brochure.

The benefits to the county would include \$90,000 in business and occupation taxes and \$167,500 in property taxes annually, a \$450,000 water line extension and \$100,000 a year in addition to taxes, according to the company.

Some citizen groups have protested wind projects in the state, arguing that the turbines

harm the environment and the scenery in the Allegheny Highlands. The groups cite bat kills, impacts on birds, harm to animal habitats and noise pollution.

About half of all U.S. electricity is generated by coal-fired power plants, while most of the remainder is produced by nuclear, natural gas, hydroelectric and petroleum plants. Less than 3 percent is generated by renewables like wind, according

to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Privately held US Wind Force in 2002 announced plans to develop up to 1,500 megawatts of wind energy projects in the Mid-Atlantic region within five years. A spokesman for the Wexford, Pa.-based company did not immediately return a telephone message Thursday.

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Shell WindEnergy Inc., a subsidiary of oil company Royal Dutch Shell PLC, last month agreed to buy a West Virginia wind power project from Nedd Power Mount Storm LLC.

Shell plans to erect up to 150 wind towers to generate 300 megawatts of power at the Grant County project, which is near US Wind Force's other West Virginia wind project. The US Wind Force site at Mount Storm is permitted for 166 turbines capable of producing 250 megawatts.

Both projects would dwarf the state's lone existing wind farm, Exelon Corp.'s 44-tower Mountaineer Wind Energy Center in neighboring Tucker County.

A group called Citizens for Responsible Wind Power has unsuccessfully sought to stop the Grant County projects, and an-

other group called the Mountain Communities for Responsible Energy is trying to crystalize opposition to another new wind farm proposed by Invenenergy LLC in Greenbrier County.

In a filing made with the PSC this week, Chicago-based Invenenergy applied for a permit to construct and operate the Beech Ridge Wind Farm, located on property owned by paper products producer MeadWestvaco Corp. The Greenbrier County wind farm would include up to 124 turbines with a capacity of 186 megawatts.

A study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office in September concluded that the federal government offers minimal oversight in approving wind power plants, leaving decision-making at the state and local levels, and that those regulators sometimes lack expertise in weighing the impact of wind power farms on bird and bat deaths.

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