

# Wind farm proposed in Greenbrier

By Jim Balow

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A Chicago company announced plans Tuesday to build up to 133 electricity-generating wind turbines in northwestern Greenbrier County.

Dave Groberg, a business development manager with Invenergy LLC, told residents at an open house at Western Greenbrier Junior High School the company plans to apply for a state siting certificate this fall to build the 200-megawatt project.

"MeadWestvaco is the key co-operating landowner," Groberg said Wednesday. "We're talking to others."

Current plans call for between 50 and 133 towers at an average height of more than 260 feet, he said. Each tower would have a three-blade rotor with blades about 130 feet long, so the total height from blade tip to ground when a blade is at the 12-o'clock position could approach 400 feet.

The location for what is called the Beech Ridge Wind Farm is the higher ridges north of U.S. 60 at Rupert, south of the Monongahela National Forest, including

Beech Ridge, Big Ridge, Ellis Knob, Old Field, Nunly Mountain, Rockcamp Ridge, Shellcamp Ridge and parts of Cold Knob.

Project cost depends on the number of turbines built. "A 200-megawatt project would cost more than \$200 million to build," Groberg said.

Unlike some companies that develop wind projects and sell them to deep-pocket energy companies that can afford to build them, privately owned Invenergy is both a developer and long-term operator, Groberg said. It has one operating wind farm and a natural gas-fired plant in Florida.

"We own the Buffalo Mountain Wind Project outside Oak Ridge, Tenn., and are currently building three projects totaling 260 megawatts in Idaho, Colorado and Montana." In addition, the company has about 25 projects in the development stage in the United States and Canada.

Invenergy has been working on the Greenbrier project since 2003, he said. In addition to the PSC certificate, it will need a variety of other permits. It promises up to 200 construction jobs and 20 permanent jobs that could

pay about \$35,000 a year.

"We would expect to pay an average of \$400,000 a year in property taxes over 20 years, higher in early years, and around \$200,000 a year in business and occupation taxes."

The project would connect with Allegheny Power's Grassy Falls Substation up to 15 miles away. The company has obtained the right of way, he said, but added, "There may be some additional landowners we may want to talk to."

If built, the project would be about three times the size of the 66-megawatt Mountaineer Wind Energy Center in Tucker County, the state's only existing wind energy project.

Two other projects have obtained PSC certificates and could be built this year — the 250-megawatt US Wind Force project and the 300-megawatt Ned-Power project, both near Mount Storm. US Wind Force also has proposed a 100-megawatt Liberty Gap project in Pendleton County.

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