

# Chicago Developer to Tap Greenbrier Winds With Turbines

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RUPERT — A Windy City energy developer intends to use Greenbrier County winds to generate electricity for sale across America.

"Invenergy Wind LLC is developing the Beech Ridge Wind Farm, a targeted \$200 million, 200-megawatt, state-of-the-art, wind-energy project," said David Groberg, development manager for the Chicago-based company which is a wholly owned affiliate of Invenergy, also of Chicago.

Beech Ridge will supply enough clean, renewable energy to satisfy the electricity demands of more than 50,000 households, he said.

"The electricity would be sold to major utilities across the United States, within the PJM system," he said.

PJM Interconnection is an electricity grid operator that provides electric-

ity to 51 million people. Its transmission area includes Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and Washington, D.C.

"West Virginia's a windy place," Groberg said about coming to West Virginia to site the wind turbines. But, he also said the proposed location is close to PJM Interconnection, which he called a strong transmission system, and a willing private landowner, Stamford, Conn.-based MeadWestvaco Corp.

MeadWestvaco is the primary landowner participating in the development. The project needs approximately 500 acres of their land, spread across 15 miles of ridges in northern Greenbrier County, he said. Those ridges include Beech Ridge, Big Ridge, Ellis Knob, Old Field, Nunly Mountain, Rockcamp Ridge,

Shellcamp Ridge and parts of Cold Knob. "We have purposely situated the project in a rather remote location, and it's been planned in such a manner that it will have minimal impact on county residents," Groberg said.

The project will produce no air pollution, nor will it pollute any streams, he said.

While the turbines could be as tall as 495 feet, the approximate height of each will be 400 feet, Groberg said. Turbine blades may be up to 165 feet across.

From 50 to 133 turbines could be installed, but the final count remains unknown, he said.

"The eventual number will depend on which size of turbine we use, which relates to how much electricity each generates," he said.

He noted the turbines operate intermittently, as the wind blows.

Substantial upgrades in the local elec-

tricity transmission system are needed, however, he said.

"Invenergy expects that the project would pay for 100 percent of the cost of these improvements, which would improve the overall ability for Greenbrier County and Nicholas County generators to deliver electricity reliably to consumers," Groberg said.

The next step in the project, which is funded entirely by private capital, is to submit an application to the West Virginia Public Service Commission this fall, Groberg said. If the process unfolds as planned, construction could begin by the summer of 2006, with energy production by Dec. 1, he said.

"(But) construction could be phased. (But) we prefer to build all in one year," he said.

Groberg said the entire community has been involved, including the Greenbrier Valley Economic Development Corp. and its executive director, Dick Nevi.

"So far everyone in the community has been supportive. Invenergy looks forward to building the project and becoming part of the Greenbrier County community," he added.

The proposed wind farm would require about 200 local workers during construction, he said. Afterward, about 20 permanent jobs will be created, Groberg said.

"We estimate the project would pay an average of \$400,000 annually in taxes to Greenbrier County for a 20-year period, as well as another \$200,000 annually to the state," Groberg said July 12 in Rupert when he announced the project.

Invenergy has more than 25 projects in active development and construction in the United States and Canada that total more than 7,500 megawatts. The company owns a wind farm at Buffalo Mountain, Tenn., which generates 27 megawatts. It is building wind farms in Idaho,