

# Greenbrier County Site Of Proposed 500-Acre Wind Farm

By Leslie Hollandsworth

The landscape of Greenbrier County is going to change if the plans of a Chicago-based energy developer are realized.

Before a small group of media and local dignitaries gathered at West Greenbrier Middle School on Tuesday, David Groberg, manager of business development for Invenergy Wind, LLC, announced the company's intent to create a wind farm on approximately 500 acres of land primarily owned by Mead Westvaco.

Dubbed the Beech Ridge Wind Farm, the \$200 million project will span approximately 15 miles of ridges in north central Greenbrier County and include the use of turbine generators. According to Groberg, the 200-megawatt project will supply enough clean, renewable energy to satisfy the electricity demands of more than 50,000 households.

Information provided by the company indicates the wind farm will create 100 to 200 temporary construction jobs, and 10 to 20 permanent, full-time employment opportunities.

Groberg said the latter will be good-paying jobs with an average annual salary of \$35,000 plus benefits.

He also estimated the project will pay an average of \$400,000 each year in taxes to Greenbrier County for a 20-year period, as well as another

\$200,000 annually to the state.

The manager emphasized that development and construction of the wind farm will be made entirely with private capital.

"Invenergy is not seeking any preferential treatment or benefits from the state of West Virginia or from Greenbrier County," he pointed out.

Touting the environmental advantages, he noted, "The project will produce no air emissions, no air pollution, no smog or haze. It will not pollute any streams."

Groberg said Invenergy has more than 25 projects in active development and construction in the U.S. and Canada, including three new wind farms totalling 260 megawatts that are being constructed in Idaho, Colorado and Montana.

At 200 megawatts, the proposed Greenbrier County project will apparently be the biggest wind farm created by the company.

Construction costs are estimated at \$2.5 million to \$10 million, while the ongoing operation would require \$500,000 to \$1 million annually.

At a cost of \$50,000 to \$75,000 each, there could be as many as 200 turbines dotting the landscape in Greenbrier County once the Beechwood Ridge Wind Farm is completed.

When announcing the proposed

development, Groberg pointed out Invenergy "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."

The total height of the turbines from tip to base will range from 330 feet to 495 feet, according to information supplied on Tuesday.

The maximum tower height is 330 feet, with blade length varying from 115 feet to 165 feet.

When asked if Invenergy had received complaints about the aesthetics of the turbines in other areas where it has developed wind farms, Groberg said the company has had to deal with certain "viewshed issues."

He noted the West Virginia Public Service Commission has a very structured permitting process that requires viewshed studies and simulations.

The public is also given the opportunity to comment on the issue, he confirmed.

Groberg said Invenergy intends to make its application to the PSC this fall.

Construction on the project could start as early as next summer, which would allow the company to begin generating electricity by December 1, 2006.



Pointing to an illustration of a turbine generator, David Groberg, manager of business development for Invenergy, LLC, explains how the company intends to harness wind in Greenbrier County to produce electricity. L. McKinney photo