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Newest wind ranch nears completion

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The California developer building New Mexico's third major wind ranch is on target to produce electricity by mid-December.

Nearly 90 of the 120 wind turbines have been erected at the San Juan Mesa wind ranch at Elida, between Roswell and Portales, said Gary Dodak, chief financial officer of Padoma Wind Power based in La Jolla, Calif.

Dodak expects the remaining turbines to be ready for commercial operation by Dec. 15.

Padoma recently sold the wind ranch to Edison Mission Group of Irvine, Calif., a subsidiary of Edison International.

Minneapolis-based Xcel Energy signed a 20-year exclusive contract to buy power produced by the facility. Xcel has said it will sell the electricity as part of its regular power mix to its 106,000 customers in eastern New Mexico.

Xcel also buys power from the 80-megawatt Caprock Wind Ranch near Tucumcari built by Cielo Wind Power of Austin, Texas. Cielo sold Caprock to Babcock & Brown, a global investment firm with U.S. headquarters in San Francisco.

Padoma purchased wind turbines from Japanese manufacturer Mitsubishi, which also provided the turbines for the 204-megawatt New Mexico Wind Energy Center near Fort Sumner. PNM has a 20-year contract to buy electricity from that facility.

The completion of San Juan Mesa will give New Mexico a total of 407 megawatts of wind generation capacity, putting the state among the top five states in the nation.

California ranks first with 2,096 megawatts, followed by Texas (1,293 MW), Iowa (632 MW), Minnesota (615 MW) and Wyoming (285 MW), according to the most recent figures available from the American Wind Energy Association.

The organization which tracks wind ranch development nationwide, expects up to 2,500 megawatts of wind energy installation to be completed during 2005.