



Business Outlook

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4th wind ranch is proposed

California company wants to put 80 turbines south of Clayton

By ROSALIE RAYBURN
Journal Staff Writer

A California wind developer is planning to build the state's fourth wind ranch, this one in northeastern New Mexico about 35 miles south of Clayton.

Santa Barbara-based Foresight Energy in negotiating with Tri-State Generation and Transmission a deal to sell it the electricity from the proposed Owaissa Wind Ranch, said Miles Barrett, Foresight's director of project development. Denver-based Tri-State supplies 12 rural electric cooperatives in New Mexico.

Although co-ops are exempt from a state law that requires utilities to derive 5 percent of the power they sell from renewable sources by 2006, Foresight hopes Tri-State will agree to buy power from the wind ranch to comply with a 1978 federal law intended to encourage more environmentally friendly commercial energy. The federal law requires utilities to buy power from such plants, which are designated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission as "qualifying facilities."

Foresight also has received qualifying facility approval for the Owaissa Wind Ranch from FERC, Barrett said.

Tri-State spokesman Jim Van

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Another wind ranch proposed in state

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Someren said talks with Foresight are continuing. "It is possible to do," said Barrett. "It's just a matter of coming to a meeting of the minds."

New Mexico ranks sixth in the country for wind generation with 287 megawatts of wind power. It would move to fifth, depending on when power generators come on line, with completion of a wind ranch under construction near Portales adding 120 more megawatts by December, and the proposed Owaissa wind ranch. New Mexico would then have a wind capacity of 527 megawatts.

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

Foresight has received land-use approvals from local authorities and has leased a total of 14,000 acres of private land straddling the border of Union and Harding counties. It has applied for approval from Tri-State to connect the wind ranch to a



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The newest wind ranch proposed in New Mexico, for about 35 miles south of Clayton, would use GE turbines like this one at a wind ranch in House. Tri-State has transmission lines in the northeast part of the state.

nearby Tri-State power line. Foresight said its studies showed average annual wind speed in the area of 18-20 miles per hour.

The proposed wind ranch would have 80 General Electric wind turbines, each capable of generating up to 1.5 megawatts of power. A megawatt is enough for about 80 average households.

Barrett estimates the turbines would be producing about 90 percent of the time.

Rep. Brian Moore, R-Clayton, said the wind ranch would be very beneficial for local landowners and schools in Union and Harding counties.

State law allows wind developers a property tax break, but they must make payments to local government and school districts in lieu of taxes. Barrett estimated those payments would top \$100 million over about 20 years.



CAROL COOPERRIDER/JOURNAL

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