

QUAY County Sun

Major wind center may come to Mesalands

● *Feasibility study will determine fate of project.*

By Tova Fruchtmann
QUAY COUNTY SUN

There has been a whirlwind of activity at Mesalands Community College recently. The stir is about a proposed project called the Mesalands Wind Center.

The plans for the wind center are to create a hands-on learning facility to train students and workers from Quay County and around the country how to operate a wind farm.

The center would also be used to educate the public on the value of utilizing wind power. Philip Barry, president of Mesalands; Pete Kampfer, director of

Tucumcari Economic Development Corporation; and David Griscomb, of the state organization Regional Development Corporation are traveling to Washington, D.C. next week to meet with U.S. Senators Pete Domenici and Jeff Bingaman, and U.S. Representative Tom Udall to discuss the project.

Though the Wind Center is still in its planning stages, the project — first introduced by retired Tucumcari teacher Robert Lumpkin — is beginning to gain support from many different groups.

Lumpkin first leaned about wind power when his daughter convinced him to attend a seminar on wind energy in Albuquerque.

Lumpkin took what he learned about wind energy back with him to Tucumcari.

He went to Barry at Mesalands Community College with an idea to create

an educational center with a single turbine where visitors could learn about wind energy.

The energy the turbine produced could also help power the college.

When other organizations caught wind of the idea they wanted to be involved and the project quickly expanded.

"It makes you feel good when everyone receives it well," Lumpkin said. "Everyone we've talked to has felt strongly about it."

Soon Barry was meeting with the New Mexico Secretary of Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources, and the Secretary of Economic Development discussing what they suggested might someday become the North American Wind Center. The facility would be the central place in the country to study wind as a renewable energy resource.



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"In terms of developing a wind industrial training facility we think there is a lot of potential here," said Secretary of Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Joanne Prukop.

But Barry said Tucumcari residents shouldn't get excited too soon. The next step in the process is to secure funding for a feasibility study to find out if industry executives are interested in having a centralized wind project at all.

New Mexico Senator Brian Moore added funding for this project on the state's capital outlay plan.

"I've been really excited about this," Moore said.

Secretary Prukop said she

would have some of her staff help, and Kampfer said the Tucumcari Economic Development cooperation would help too.

Kampfer said the study would also be used to find out what kind of economic impact this project could have on the city of Tucumcari.

Even if the feasibility project for the larger training center doesn't come through, Barry said he wants to go back to Lumpkin's original idea — an educational facility with one turbine.

"The minimum we're going to get out of this is going to be a good thing," Lumpkin said.

At this point, however, everything is still up in the air, but the answers are blowing in the wind.