



Wind Farm Blows into Mid-Columbia

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Bonneville Power Administration

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PORTLAND, Ore. – The Bonneville Power Administration and Washington Winds Inc. announced today they are working together to develop and build a 150-megawatt wind farm that will generate enough electricity on average to serve more than 36,000 Northwest homes. The Maiden Wind Farm would be located about 15 miles north of Prosser, Wash., in Benton and Yakima counties.

"This is one of several wind projects BPA is looking to acquire," said BPA Acting Administrator Steve Wright. "Harvesting the strong, steady winds of the Columbia River Basin works especially well with our hydro power base," Wright said. "When the winds blow, we can save more water in reservoirs. When the winds are still, we can release the river's power. Wind farms add to our local renewable resources."

Washington Gov. Gary Locke said of the project, "The Maiden Wind Farm will help alleviate the current energy crisis and provide clean, renewable energy for Washington. And because a portion of the project is located on state land, it also will help fund our schools. It's a double win for Washington."

Under a predevelopment agreement, Washington Winds Inc. will secure the necessary permits for the wind farm. BPA will prepare an environmental impact statement. Public involvement is slated to begin this June, when BPA will invite landowners, citizens and governments to suggest issues that should be addressed in the EIS.

"We are excited about the opportunity to bring a world class wind ranch to the Pacific Northwest and provide clean, low-cost, renewable energy to enhance our quality of life which we have come to expect," said Rick Koebbe, president of Washington Winds Inc.

BPA will purchase 150 megawatts of power from the wind farm for 20 years with an option for up to another 250 MW if siting and environmental reviews prove successful. The first turbines could begin producing power in late 2002. Power would be integrated into the BPA power lines that already cross the project site.

Each wind turbine would produce approximately 1 to 2 megawatts and sit atop a 200-foot tower. The three-bladed turbines spin at 20 to 30 rpm and are easy to construct and maintain. Each \$1 million machine will have its own computer to keep the turbine facing into the wind for maximum efficiency.

"Wind power finally has traction in the Northwest. Today's announcement affirms that wind will be supplying several thousand megawatts of clean electricity to our region within the next few years. BPA deserves credit for realizing this potential sooner than almost any other regional player," said Angus Duncan, president of the Bonneville Environmental Foundation.

Chuck Dawsey, manager of Benton Rural Electric Association said, "Bonneville and co-ops need to work together to bring more cost effective renewable power resources to the region."

"This project is yet another example of BPA's significant leadership on wind energy and its commitment to bring new renewable energy resources to the Northwest," said Peter West, Green Program director for the Renewable Northwest Project, a regional environmental group. "We look forward to participating in the EIS process."

Gary Ballew, Benton County Sustainable Development manager, added, "The Maiden Wind Farm not only helps the local economy through the creation of 100 construction jobs and highly skilled permanent workers, but the addition of wind energy also supports Benton County's efforts to become a regional leader in energy production and energy research."

"This project will help build local infrastructure and expertise to enable the development of thousands of megawatts of wind generation in smaller-scale installations throughout the region – locally owned clusters or single turbines providing clean, affordable energy for irrigation, ranches and rural utilities," noted Heather Rhoads-Weaver of Northwest Sustainable Energy for Economic Development (SEED). "Mid-Columbia may well become the hub for construction, operations and maintenance of satellite wind turbines across the Pacific Northwest."

Ed Prilucik, mayor of Sunnyside added, "Modern wind projects are a great way to diversify Sunnyside's economic base. This area of the state has an abundance of wind energy, and we welcome efforts to utilize the renewable resource in a manner that will add capacity and diversity to the Pacific Northwest's electrical distribution system."

Washington Winds Inc. is a subsidiary of Pacific Winds Inc., based in Boise, Idaho. The company owns and operates over 900 wind turbines in California.

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