

Recent Montana wind energy projects hint at economic promise

January 31, 2012 | Bozeman Daily Chronicle (MT) Author: Jeff L. Fox, Guest Columnist | Section: Guest Columnists | 675 Words OpenURL Link

"Steady wind energy polices are paying off." This might well be the subheading to the recent flurry of articles detailing new wind energy development in Montana. In case you missed the good news, here are the highlights:

First, two weeks ago, wind-energy developer NaturEner announced the start of construction for its 189-megawatt Rim Rock wind farm near Shelby, which is expected to generate enough energy to power more than 60,000 homes, and will offset more than 389,000 metric tons of CO2 emissions per year. If NaturEner's neighboring 210-megawatt Glacier Wind Farm is any indication of the number of jobs we can expect, Rim Rock will create more than 300 manyears worth of employment in the construction phase, plus dozens of good-paying, permanent jobs once operating.

Next, the new 10-megawatt Gordon Butte wind farm near Martinsdale went online last week. The project is quintessentially Montanan, having been developed by Bozeman's own Oversight Resources, constructed by Dick Anderson Construction, headquartered in Helena, and financed by Stockman Bank, headquartered in Miles City. These kinds of community wind projects are extremely popular and should be roundly supported as they recycle profits back into the state, to create an even bigger economic impact.

Montana wind is also attracting investment dollars from farther afield. This week, Goldwind, a global turbine manufacturer, announced it would begin construction on a new 20-megawatt wind farm east of Harlowton.

Finally, if the Public Service Commission approves Northwestern Energy's proposed purchase of the 40-megawatt Spion Kop wind project, a plan that drew the support of the Montana Consumer Counsel, the \$86 million project is also expected to be constructed this year.

Individually these projects mean jobs for Montanans, local and state tax revenues, and millions of dollars in royalty payments to landowners. They also mean a cleaner, healthier environment for Montana and America. Collectively, they point toward results on a forward-looking vision of energy, led by Montana policymakers in partnership with local, regional and global businesses.

Montana has charted a steady course to developing our tremendous wind energy resource. In 2005, Gov. Schweitzer and then Sen. Jon Tester passed Montana's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard with bipartisan support. The bill jump-started several renewable energy projects, including our state's first major wind farm at Judith Gap. In 2007, Gov. Schweitzer shepherded "clean and green" energy legislation though the legislature, putting Montana at the forefront of the nation in offering tax incentives for clean energy development and attracting new businesses to the state. The policies are paying off. Before 2005, Montana had just one megawatt of wind energy installed. Today, we could have 635 megawatts installed by the end of 2012.

At the federal level, Montana Sen. Max Baucus has been a key supporter of the most important policy for wind energy development, the wind energy production tax credit or PTC. The two cents per kilowatt-hour performance-based tax break for wind energy has also drawn the past support of Montana Rep. Denny Rehberg. In 2006, he wrote a letter to then President Bush asking that the PTC be extended, though he has been regrettably quiet on the current proposal to extend the PTC. And since taking up his post in the Senate, Tester has continued to provide wind energy leadership, supporting the PTC and introducing legislation that would encourage more community wind projects, like the Gordon Butte project.

making clean energy part of our economic development strategy, Montanans have harnessed our natural resources in new ways and attracted nearly \$1.5 billion in investments from renewable energy companies that see Montana as a good place to do business. While our recent success should be celebrated, it could also signal more good

things to come. With continued support and stable policies, Montana could truly begin to tap our wind energy potential, producing jobs and economic opportunity at home, and much needed clean energy for the nation.

Jeff L. Fox is the Montana policy advocate for Renewable Northwest Project, a non-profit advocacy group promoting the responsible development of renewable energy resources.

© 2012 The Bozeman Daily Chronicle. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Copyright (c) 2012 Bozeman Daily Chronicle

• Citation (aglc Style)

Jeff L. Fox, Guest Columnist, 'Recent Montana wind energy projects hint at economic promise', *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* (online), 31 Jan 2012 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/13CA0ED85F7953C8



All eyes on energy, ag industries for 2012

January 8, 2012 | Independent Record (Helena, MT) Author: TOM LUTEY Billings Gazette | Section: Business | 1645 Words OpenURL Link

The Mayans had it right. If you're going to predict the future, it's best to aim far beyond your life expectancy, lest you wind up red-faced in a bunker overstocked with SPAM and ammo.

Patrick Barkey's predictions aren't as old as the Mayans, who predicted the world's end on Dec. 21, 2012, right before the year's last paid holiday and the first meaningful college bowl games. The Bureau of Business and Economic Research director bases his forecasts on the present and the immediate past. Most people did when asked by The Billings Gazette to look into the future.

That said, Barkey's economic forecast was still foreboding.

"We're headed toward the trees at end of the runway," Barkey said of the 2012 economy.

Statewide, economic growth is still sputtering. Manufacturing in northwest Montana, anchored by timber, hasn't recovered and probably won't anytime soon. Construction, once white-hot in Gallatin and Flathead counties, actually softened in 2011, which has Barkey concerned about where the building industry is headed in 2012. A 3 percent growth rate would be strong indicator of good economic progress, but Barkey sees statewide economic growth of 2 percent or less.

However, Montana from Billings east is primed for growth. The oil economy on Montana's border with North Dakota is creating jobs as far west as Billings, where anyone with a commercial driver's license or a welding rod has a good chance of getting work related to the Bakken oil play. On the Montana side, oil production is valued at \$1.2 billion, a pittance compared with production in North Dakota, which has 200 drilling rigs to Montana's nine. All indications are that growth on the Montana side will be significant in 2012.

But jobs related directly to oil isn't where the real economic benefit is, said Barbara Wagner, chief economist with the Montana Department of Labor. The biggest benefit is in the retail economy where wages and profits are spent. Billings is most likely to see its biggest economic growth through retail, fueled by oil and by farms and ranches, which are experiencing some of their best commodity prices ever.

A coal bottleneck?

Outlook for other energy economies isn't as bright. Bud Clinch of the Montana Coal Council does not expect 2012 to the good year for coal, despite key 2011 developments suggesting coal industry growth.

"Any increased production would have to come from increased exports of coal, and right now that is bottlenecked," Clinch said.

The bottleneck is occurring at the ports of the Pacific Northwest, where coal companies have so far failed to find a terminal for loading Asia-bound ships with Wyoming and Montana coal.

It's been exactly a year since protesters in Washington state derailed plans for a coal terminal near Longview. The terminal would have exported at least 5.7 million tons of Powder River Basin coal annually. Coal opponents led by the group Columbia River Keeper and Earth Justice challenged the terminals permitting, not only for environmental impacts in Washington but also to stop mining in Montana and Wyoming and to prevent Chinese power plants from burning coal and producing greenhouse gases.

There are at least three other coal terminals being eyed, including Cherry Point industrial area north of Bellingham, Wash. Cherry Point is coal's latest environmental lighting rod. The site has two oil refineries and an aluminum smelter, but environmentalists are opposing the proposed coal port.

Without a new U.S. port in the Pacific Northwest, there is only one West Coast coal port, the Westshore Terminal on Roberts Bank Delta, British Columbia. Montana and Wyoming coal cannot be developed further without another port, Clinch said.

On the Powder River end of the rail line, interest is growing. Manyuan Coal, of China, told Gov. Brian Schweitzer in November that it's interested in buying Montana coal and possibly opening a mine here. Australian energy giant Ambre Energy bought a 50 percent share of Decker Coal.

Arch Coal Inc. intends to mine 1.3 billion tons of Otter Creek coal, though those plans are being challenged by anticoal groups, namely the Sierra Club, Northern Plains Resource Council and the National Wildlife Federation. Those groups say developing Otter Creek, which involves public land, would violate Montanan's constitutional guarantee to a "clean and healthful" environment.

Schweitzer said the state will continue promoting Montana coal and trust that the ports will open up eventually.

"We're going to continue to attract interest, not just from the U.S., but all around the world for Montana coal," Schweitzer said. "We're one of the largest natural resource plays on the Asian Pacific Rim. That's the bottom line, and there is increasing interest in coal from Korea, Taiwan and Japan, they are the largest consumers of coal and all three of them are interested in tapping the Montana market. Mainland China is interested in purchasing Montana coal."

Blowing in the wind

Green energy development could see a good year in 2012, the governor said. Northern Montana wind farms should have the Montana Alberta tie-line to ship electricity to urban markets next year. That's good news for Rim Rock Wind, an \$800 million, 206-turbine wind farm proposed for Glacier and Toole counties. California utilities have already spoken for the power. The nearby 71-turbine Glacier Wind farm would also benefit from the project.

Schweitzer said the market for Montana wind energy is strong if the state can resolve transmission line challenges. In addition to the MATL, the governor would like to see upgrades to the Colstrip Transmission System, which runs from southeast Montana to Townsend, where it connects with Bonneville Power Administration lines. The upgrade wouldn't require additional power lines or towers, but rather more efficient transformers along the existing path. The private utility companies that own the Colstrip line are eager to upgrade, but Bonneville hasn't been quick to act.

If the lines were improved, it would open up capacity for Montana wind power, which could be sold in the Pacific Northwest, where state laws are pushing utilities away from coal-generated electricity. The thinking is that Montana wind would be able to firm up wind farms in the Columbia River Basin by generating power when Columbia winds are still.

Good times

for cattle industry

Expect another good year for cattle prices. The new year is shaping up to be a good one for ranchers who saw their best prices ever in 2011. Gross income for cattle was well over \$1 billion for Montana in 2011, as foreign demand for U.S. beef jumped up 20 percent and Texas and Oklahoma drought made good cattle hard to come by. The number of beef cattle in North America is at a 60-year low and it will take years to bring those numbers up. If Americans rise from there economic doldrums craving steak, demand pressures could further drive up beef prices.

Other favorable cards in the deck for cattle ranchers include Japan's lifting of age restrictions on U.S. beef. Japan was the largest foreign buyer of U.S. beef before bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or mad cow disease, was discovered in a cow from Washington state. The process of lifting the age restrictions is just beginning, but groups like the National Cattlemen's Beef Association estimate beef sales to Japan could increase \$1 billion a year.

South Korea is also expected to re-evaluate its age limits on U.S. beef. In 2011, South Korea is rivaling Mexico as the top buyer of U.S. beef. Last September, Congress agreed to a new free trade agreement with South Korea that because of heavy influence by Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., included language lifting tariffs on U.S. beef over time and granting the U.S. officials a chance at challenging South Korea's age restrictions.

However, there's a catch. Erin Daley Borror, economist for the U.S. Meat Export Federation, cautioned that a strengthening U.S. dollar could price American beef out of some markets in 2012. Borror said the outlook is still good, but the dollar concerns are real.

Dollar strength key

to wheat market

The outlook for wheat is good to soft, depending on the dollar and global production. Wheat income in Montana also appeared to be headed for another \$1 billion year in 2011. Billion dollar wheat income was once a rare occurrence in Montana, but strong wheat prices fueled foreign demand for gain in four of the last five years has produced several billion dollar years.

But prices are softening heading into 2012 as Australia, Argentina and Canada all appear headed toward bigger harvests than in recent years, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

U.S. wheat is going to have to be competitively priced as global grain on storage numbers hit a record high, but a strengthening dollar is going to make that tough. Barkey and other economists see challenges ahead for the U.S. dollar if the euro falls in value, which would make European products more affordable relative to the U.S. products rising in price as the dollar strengthens.

Concerns over tourism

Tourism is another part of the Montana's economy that could suffer if the euro tanks, said Vincent Smith, a Montana State University economist who specializes in government agriculture policy and foreign trade.

"The bigger issue for this state is going to be what happens to trips to Yellowstone Park," Smith said. "Before I would worry about agriculture, I would worry about tourism."

Two things happen if the euro falls in value relative to the strengthening dollar, Smith said. First, the cost of visiting Yellowstone and Glacier national parks would increase dramatically for European tourists. Second, European vacations become much more affordable for American tourists who might have otherwise planned a Yellowstone visit.

Mining may be the other casualty of a soft euro, said Smith. If the European economy is soft, the demand for Montana metals is also likely to decline. A sour European economy will impact European manufacturing that's most likely to depend on Montana copper and palladium.

Even a weak euro might be the best case scenario, considering that if the European Union dissolves its shared currency, the continent is probably drifting into a deep recession that could also pull down the U.S. economy.

Copyright (c) 2012 Independent Record

• Citation (aglc Style)

https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/13C272F89AD2DA10



All eyes on energy, ag industries as 2012 dawns

January 1, 2012 | Billings Gazette, The (MT) Author: TOM LUTEY Of The Gazette Staff| Section: Local | 2102 Words OpenURL Link

The Mayans had it right. If you're going to predict the future, it's best to aim far beyond your life expectancy, lest you wind up red-faced in a bunker overstocked with Spam and ammo.

Patrick Barkey's predictions aren't as old as the Mayans, who predicted the world's end on Dec. 21, 2012, right before the year's last paid holiday and the first meaningful college bowl games. The Bureau of Business and Economic Research director bases his forecasts on the present and the immediate past. Most people did when asked by The Billings Gazette to look into the future.

That said, Barkey's economic forecast was still foreboding.

"We're headed toward the trees at end of the runway," Barkey said of the 2012 economy.

Statewide, economic growth is still sputtering. Manufacturing in northwest Montana, anchored by timber, hasn't recovered and probably won't anytime soon. Construction, once white-hot in Gallatin and Flathead counties, actually softened in 2011, which has Barkey concerned about where the building industry is headed in 2012. A 3 percent growth rate would be strong indicator of good economic progress, but Barkey sees statewide economic growth of 2 percent or less.

However, Montana from Billings east is primed for growth. The oil economy on Montana's border with North Dakota is creating jobs as far west as Billings, where anyone with a commercial driver's license or a welding rod has a good chance of getting work related to the Bakken oil play. On the Montana side, oil production is valued at \$1.2 billion, a pittance compared with production in North Dakota, which has 200 drilling rigs to Montana's nine. All indications are that growth on the Montana side will be significant in 2012.

But jobs related directly to oil isn't where the real economic benefit is, said Barbara Wagner, chief economist with the Montana Department of Labor. The biggest benefit is in the retail economy where wages and profits are spent. Billings is most likely to see its biggest economic growth through retail, fueled by oil and by farms and ranches, which are experiencing some of their best commodity prices ever.

Outlook for other energy economies isn't as bright. Bud Clinch of the Montana Coal Council does not expect 2012 to the good year for coal, despite key 2011 developments suggesting coal industry growth.

"Any increased production would have to come from increased exports of coal, and right now that is bottlenecked," Clinch said.

The bottleneck is occurring at the ports of the Pacific Northwest, where coal companies have so far failed to find a terminal for loading Asia-bound ships with Wyoming and Montana coal.

It's been exactly a year since protesters in Washington state derailed plans for a coal terminal at the Port of Longview. The terminal would have exported at least 5.7 million tons of Powder River Basin coal annually. Coal opponents led by the group Columbia River Keeper and Earth Justice challenged the terminals permitting, not only for environmental impacts in Washington but also to stop mining in Montana and Wyoming and to prevent Chinese power plants from burning coal and producing greenhouse gas.

Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer rushed to Washington to meet with Gov. Christine Gregoire and ensure that the terminal got a fair hearing.

Terminal developer Millennium Bulk Logistics later pulled its permit application. Shortly thereafter, it was revealed that Millennium's coal export plans were closer to 60 million tons annually.

There are at least three other coal terminals being eyed, including Cherry Point industrial area north of Bellingham, Wash. Cherry Point is coal's latest environmental lighting rod. The site has two oil refineries and an aluminum smelter, but environmentalists are opposing the proposed coal port.

Without a new U.S. port in the Pacific Northwest, there is only one West Coast coal port, the Westshore Terminal on Roberts Bank Delta, British Columbia. Montana and Wyoming coal cannot be developed further without another port, Clinch said.

Montana coal

On the Powder River end of the rail line, interest is growing. Manyuan Coal, of China, told Schweitzer in November that it's interested in buying Montana coal and possibly opening a mine here. Australian energy giant Ambre Energy bought a 50 percent share of Decker Coal.

Arch Coal Inc. intends to mine 1.3 billion tons of Otter Creek coal, though those plans are being challenged by anticoal groups, namely the Sierra Club, Northern Plains Resource Council and the National Wildlife Federation. Those groups say developing Otter Creek, which involves public land, would violate Montanan's constitutional guarantee to a "clean and healthful" environment.

Schweitzer said the state will continue promoting Montana coal and trust that the ports will open up eventually.

"We're going to continue to attract interest, not just from the U.S., but all around the world for Montana coal," Schweitzer said. "We're one of the largest natural resource plays on the Asian Pacific Rim. That's the bottom line, and there is increasing interest in coal from Korea, Taiwan and Japan, they are the largest consumers of coal and all three of them are interested in tapping the Montana market. Mainland China is interested in purchasing Montana coal."

Green energy development could see a good year in 2012, the governor said. Northern Montana wind farms should have the Montana Alberta tie-line to ship electricity to urban markets next year. That's good news for Rim Rock Wind, an \$800 million, 206-turbine wind farm proposed for Glacier and Toole counties. California utilities have already spoken for the power.

The nearby 71-turbine Glacier Wind farm would also benefit from the project.

Wind energy

Schweitzer said the market for Montana wind energy is strong if the state can resolve transmission line challenges. In addition to the MATL, the governor would like to see upgrades to the Colstrip Transmission System, which runs from southeast Montana to Townsend, where it connects with Bonneville Power Administration lines. The upgrade wouldn't require additional powerlines or towers, but rather more efficient transformers along the existing path. The private utility companies that own the Colstrip line are eager to upgrade, but Bonneville hasn't been quick to act.

If the lines were improved, it would open up capacity for Montana wind power, which could be sold in the Pacific Northwest, where state laws are pushing utilities away from coal-generated electricity. The thinking is that Montana wind would be able to firm up wind farms in the Columbia River Basin by generating power when Columbia winds are still.

Expect another good year for cattle prices. The new year is shaping up to be a good one for ranchers who saw their best prices ever in 2011. Gross income for cattle was well over \$1 billion for Montana in 2011, as foreign demand

for U.S. beef jumped up 20 percent and Texas and Oklahoma drought made good cattle hard to come by. The number of beef cattle in North America is at a 60-year low and it will take years to bring those numbers up. If Americans rise from there economic doldrums craving steak, demand pressures could further drive up beef prices.

Other favorable cards in the deck for cattle ranchers include Japan's lifting of age restrictions on U.S. beef. Japan was the largest foreign buyer of U.S. beef before bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or mad cow disease, was discovered in a cow from Washington state. Because the disease is mostly found in older cattle, Japan lowered the age limit on U.S. beef to 20 months. The decision cut beef trade with the Japanese by several billion dollars over the last eight years. Japan is now considering raising the age limit to 30 months.

The process of lifting the age restrictions is just beginning, but groups like the National Cattlemen's Beef Association estimate beef sales to Japan could increase \$1 billion a year.

South Korea is also expected to re-evaluate its age limits on U.S. beef. In 2011, South Korea is rivaling Mexico as the top buyer of U.S. beef. Last September, Congress agreed to a new free trade agreement with South Korea that because of heavy influence by Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., included language lifting tariffs on U.S. beef over time and granting the U.S. officials a chance at challenging South Korea's age restrictions.

However, there's a catch. Erin Daley Borror, economist for the U.S. Meat Export Federation, cautioned that a strengthening U.S. dollar could price American beef out of some markets in 2012. Borror said the outlook is still good, but the dollar concerns are real.

The outlook for wheat is good to soft, depending on the dollar and global production. Wheat income in Montana also appeared to be headed for another \$1 billion year in 2011. Billion dollar wheat income was once a rare occurrence in Montana, but strong wheat prices fueled foreign demand for gain in four of the last five years has produced several billion dollar years.

But prices are softening heading into 2012 as Australia, Argentina and Canada all appear headed toward bigger harvests than in recent years, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

U.S. wheat is going to have to be competitively priced as global grain on storage numbers hit a record high, but a strengthening dollar is going to make that tough. Barkey and other economists see challenges ahead for the U.S. dollar if the euro falls in value, which would make European products more affordable relative to the U.S. products rising in price as the dollar strengthens.

Concerns over tourism

Tourism is another part of the Montana's economy that could suffer if the euro tanks, said Vincent Smith, a Montana State University economist who specializes in government agriculture policy and foreign trade.

"The bigger issue for this state is going to be what happens to trips to Yellowstone Park," Smith said. "Before I would worry about agriculture, I would worry about tourism."

Two things happen if the euro falls in value relative to the strengthening dollar, Smith said. First, the cost of visiting Yellowstone and Glacier national parks would increase dramatically for European tourists. Second, European vacations become much more affordable for American tourists who might have otherwise planned a Yellowstone visit.

Mining may be the other casualty of a soft euro, said Smith. If the European economy is soft, the demand for Montana metals is also likely to decline. A sour European economy will impact European manufacturing that's most likely to depend on Montana copper and palladium.

Even a weak euro might be the best case scenario, considering that if the European Union dissolves its shared currency, the continent is probably drifting into a deep recession that could also pull down the U.S. economy.

Some sure bets for 2012

There are some things sure to happen in the year to come. Montana's U.S. Senate race between Democratic incumbent Jon Tester and Republican challenger Rep. Denny Rehberg has already been cited as one of the most high-profile races in the United States Senate. Tester narrowly defeated former Republican Sen. Conrad Burns for the seat in 2006. The winner of the 2012 race could decide which party controls the U.S. Senate. Already, third-party groups are buying up TV ad space a full year ahead for the election. Expect to be bombarded by political ads for the next 11 months.

Also, this is Schweitzer's final year as governor. The Democratic leader, first elected to office by wide margins even as Montana voters handed former Republican President George W. Bush a 20 percent victory, cannot run again because of term limits. Schweitzer, who made headlines in 2011 by using a hot-iron veto brand to incinerate his opponent's bills coming out the 2011 Legislature, is being quiet about what's next for him.

After talking coal with The Gazette before the Christmas holiday, the governor said it wouldn't be right to discuss what he might do after leaving office because any plans might raise conflict-of-interest concerns.

"The most important thing I think I can do is hand the next administration, whoever that will be, the largest budget surplus in the history of the state," Schweitzer said. "We've cut taxes. We've increased the size of the state's gross domestic product from \$23 billion to \$37 billion. The GDP has grown 75 percent. At the same time, government has grown 2.5 percent."

Contact Tom Lutey at tlutey@billingsgazette.com or 657-1288

Copyright (c) 2012 The Billings Gazette

• Citation (aglc Style)

TOM LUTEY Of The Gazette Staff, 'All eyes on energy, ag industries as 2012 dawns', *Billings Gazette, The* (online), 1 Jan 2012 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/13C01CC2926E71E0



All eyes on energy, ag industries as 2012 dawns

January 1, 2012 | Billings Gazette, The (MT)

Author: TOM LUTEY Of The Gazette Staff | Section: Local | 2099 Words

OpenURL Link

The Mayans had it right. If you're going to predict the future, it's best to aim far beyond your life expectancy, lest you wind up red-faced in a bunker overstocked with SPAM and ammo.

Patrick Barkey's predictions aren't as old as the Mayans, who predicted the world's end on Dec. 21, 2012, right before the year's last paid holiday and the first meaningful college bowl games. The Bureau of Business and Economic Research director bases his forecasts on the present and the immediate past. Most people did when asked by The Billings Gazette to look into the future.

That said, Barkey's economic forecast was still foreboding.

"We're headed toward the trees at end of the runway," Barkey said of the 2012 economy.

Statewide, economic growth is still sputtering. Manufacturing in northwest Montana, anchored by timber, hasn't recovered and probably won't anytime soon. Construction, once white-hot in Gallatin and Flathead counties, actually softened in 2011, which has Barkey concerned about where the building industry is headed in 2012. A 3 percent growth rate would be strong indicator of good economic progress, but Barkey sees statewide economic growth of 2 percent or less.

However, Montana from Billings east is primed for growth. The oil economy on Montana's border with North Dakota is creating jobs as far west as Billings, where anyone with a commercial driver's license or a welding rod has a good chance of getting work related to the Bakken oil play. On the Montana side, oil production is valued at \$1.2 billion, a pittance compared with production in North Dakota, which has 200 drilling rigs to Montana's nine. All indications are that growth on the Montana side will be significant in 2012.

But jobs related directly to oil isn't where the real economic benefit is, said Barbara Wagner, chief economist with the Montana Department of Labor. The biggest benefit is in the retail economy where wages and profits are spent. Billings is most likely to see its biggest economic growth through retail, fueled by oil and by farms and ranches, which are experiencing some of their best commodity prices ever.

Outlook for other energy economies isn't as bright. Bud Clinch of the Montana Coal Council does not expect 2012 to the good year for coal, despite key 2011 developments suggesting coal industry growth.

"Any increased production would have to come from increased exports of coal, and right now that is bottlenecked," Clinch said.

The bottleneck is occurring at the ports of the Pacific Northwest, where coal companies have so far failed to find a terminal for loading Asia-bound ships with Wyoming and Montana coal.

It's been exactly a year since protesters in Washington state derailed plans for a coal terminal near Longview. The terminal would have exported at least 5.7 million tons of Powder River Basin coal annually. Coal opponents led by the group Columbia River Keeper and Earth Justice challenged the terminals permitting, not only for environmental impacts in Washington but also to stop mining in Montana and Wyoming and to prevent Chinese power plants from burning coal and producing greenhouse gas.

Montana Gov. Brian Schweitzer rushed to Washington to meet with Gov. Christine Gregoire and ensure that the terminal got a fair hearing.

Terminal developer Millennium Bulk Logistics later pulled its permit application. Shortly thereafter, it was revealed that Millennium's coal export plans were closer to 60 million tons annually.

There are at least three other coal terminals being eyed, including Cherry Point industrial area north of Bellingham, Wash. Cherry Point is coal's latest environmental lighting rod. The site has two oil refineries and an aluminum smelter, but environmentalists are opposing the proposed coal port.

Without a new U.S. port in the Pacific Northwest, there is only one West Coast coal port, the Westshore Terminal on Roberts Bank Delta, British Columbia. Montana and Wyoming coal cannot be developed further without another port, Clinch said.

Montana coal

On the Powder River end of the rail line, interest is growing. Manyuan Coal, of China, told Schweitzer in November that it's interested in buying Montana coal and possibly opening a mine here. Australian energy giant Ambre Energy bought a 50 percent share of Decker Coal.

Arch Coal Inc. intends to mine 1.3 billion tons of Otter Creek coal, though those plans are being challenged by anticoal groups, namely the Sierra Club, Northern Plains Resource Council and the National Wildlife Federation. Those groups say developing Otter Creek, which involves public land, would violate Montanan's constitutional guarantee to a "clean and healthful" environment.

Schweitzer said the state will continue promoting Montana coal and trust that the ports will open up eventually.

"We're going to continue to attract interest, not just from the U.S., but all around the world for Montana coal," Schweitzer said. "We're one of the largest natural resource plays on the Asian Pacific Rim. That's the bottom line, and there is increasing interest in coal from Korea, Taiwan and Japan, they are the largest consumers of coal and all three of them are interested in tapping the Montana market. Mainland China is interested in purchasing Montana coal."

Green energy development could see a good year in 2012, the governor said. Northern Montana wind farms should have the Montana Alberta tie-line to ship electricity to urban markets next year. That's good news for Rim Rock Wind, an \$800 million, 206-turbine wind farm proposed for Glacier and Toole counties. California utilities have already spoken for the power.

The nearby 71-turbine Glacier Wind farm would also benefit from the project.

Wind energy

Schweitzer said the market for Montana wind energy is strong if the state can resolve transmission line challenges. In addition to the MATL, the governor would like to see upgrades to the Colstrip Transmission System, which runs from southeast Montana to Townsend, where it connects with Bonneville Power Administration lines. The upgrade wouldn't require additional powerlines or towers, but rather more efficient transformers along the existing path. The private utility companies that own the Colstrip line are eager to upgrade, but Bonneville hasn't been quick to act.

If the lines were improved, it would open up capacity for Montana wind power, which could be sold in the Pacific Northwest, where state laws are pushing utilities away from coal-generated electricity. The thinking is that Montana wind would be able to firm up wind farms in the Columbia River Basin by generating power when Columbia winds are still.

Expect another good year for cattle prices. The new year is shaping up to be a good one for ranchers who saw their best prices ever in 2011. Gross income for cattle was well over \$1 billion for Montana in 2011, as foreign demand

for U.S. beef jumped up 20 percent and Texas and Oklahoma drought made good cattle hard to come by. The number of beef cattle in North America is at a 60-year low and it will take years to bring those numbers up. If Americans rise from there economic doldrums craving steak, demand pressures could further drive up beef prices.

Other favorable cards in the deck for cattle ranchers include Japan's lifting of age restrictions on U.S. beef. Japan was the largest foreign buyer of U.S. beef before bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or mad cow disease, was discovered in a cow from Washington state. Because the disease is mostly found in older cattle, Japan lowered the age limit on U.S. beef to 20 months. The decision cut beef trade with the Japanese by several billion dollars over the last eight years. Japan is now considering raising the age limit to 30 months.

The process of lifting the age restrictions is just beginning, but groups like the National Cattlemen's Beef Association estimate beef sales to Japan could increase \$1 billion a year.

South Korea is also expected to re-evaluate its age limits on U.S. beef. In 2011, South Korea is rivaling Mexico as the top buyer of U.S. beef. Last September, Congress agreed to a new free trade agreement with South Korea that because of heavy influence by Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., included language lifting tariffs on U.S. beef over time and granting the U.S. officials a chance at challenging South Korea's age restrictions.

However, there's a catch. Erin Daley Borror, economist for the U.S. Meat Export Federation, cautioned that a strengthening U.S. dollar could price American beef out of some markets in 2012. Borror said the outlook is still good, but the dollar concerns are real.

The outlook for wheat is good to soft, depending on the dollar and global production. Wheat income in Montana also appeared to be headed for another \$1 billion year in 2011. Billion dollar wheat income was once a rare occurrence in Montana, but strong wheat prices fueled foreign demand for gain in four of the last five years has produced several billion dollar years.

But prices are softening heading into 2012 as Australia, Argentina and Canada all appear headed toward bigger harvests than in recent years, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

U.S. wheat is going to have to be competitively priced as global grain on storage numbers hit a record high, but a strengthening dollar is going to make that tough. Barkey and other economists see challenges ahead for the U.S. dollar if the euro falls in value, which would make European products more affordable relative to the U.S. products rising in price as the dollar strengthens.

Concerns over tourism

Tourism is another part of the Montana's economy that could suffer if the euro tanks, said Vincent Smith, a Montana State University economist who specializes in government agriculture policy and foreign trade.

"The bigger issue for this state is going to be what happens to trips to Yellowstone Park," Smith said. "Before I would worry about agriculture, I would worry about tourism."

Two things happen if the euro falls in value relative to the strengthening dollar, Smith said. First, the cost of visiting Yellowstone and Glacier national parks would increase dramatically for European tourists. Second, European vacations become much more affordable for American tourists who might have otherwise planned a Yellowstone visit.

Mining may be the other casualty of a soft euro, said Smith. If the European economy is soft, the demand for Montana metals is also likely to decline. A sour European economy will impact European manufacturing that's most likely to depend on Montana copper and palladium.

Even a weak euro might be the best case scenario, considering that if the European Union dissolves its shared currency, the continent is probably drifting into a deep recession that could also pull down the U.S. economy.

Some sure bets for 2012

There are some things sure to happen in the year to come. Montana's U.S. Senate race between Democratic incumbent Jon Tester and Republican challenger Rep. Denny Rehberg has already been cited as one of the most high-profile races in the United States Senate. Tester narrowly defeated former Republican Sen. Conrad Burns for the seat in 2006. The winner of the 2012 race could decide which party controls the U.S. Senate. Already, third-party groups are buying up TV ad space a full year ahead for the election. Expect to be bombarded by political ads for the next 11 months.

Also, this is Schweitzer's final year as governor. The Democratic leader, first elected to office by wide margins even as Montana voters handed former Republican President George W. Bush a 20 percent victory, cannot run again because of term limits. Schweitzer, who made headlines in 2011 by using a hot-iron veto brand to incinerate his opponent's bills coming out the 2011 Legislature, is being quiet about what's next for him.

After talking coal with The Gazette before the Christmas holiday, the governor said it wouldn't be right to discuss what he might do after leaving office because any plans might raise conflict-of-interest concerns.

"The most important thing I think I can do is hand the next administration, whoever that will be, the largest budget surplus in the history of the state," Schweitzer said. "We've cut taxes. We've increased the size of the state's gross domestic product from \$23 billion to \$37 billion. The GDP has grown 75 percent. At the same time, government has grown 2.5 percent."

Contact Tom Lutey at tlutey@billingsgazette.com or 657-1288

Copyright (c) 2012 The Billings Gazette

• Citation (aglc Style)

TOM LUTEY Of The Gazette Staff, 'All eyes on energy, ag industries as 2012 dawns', *Billings Gazette, The* (online), 1 Jan 2012 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/13C16DA436F1E718



County's taxable value up; majority of tax bills unchanged

November 2, 2011 | Shelby Promoter (MT) Author: Briana Wipf | Section: News | 555 Words

OpenURL Link

Most Toole County residents will see their 2011 property taxes stay about the same as what they paid in 2010, said Toole County treasurer Boyd Jackson. However, he added residents in Sunburst and Kevin will see their taxes go up slightly due to local taxation.

Meanwhile, taxable value for Toole County went up slightly from 2010 value, said Jackson. This year's taxable value of \$19,507,217 is up from 2010's value of \$18,946,802.

Glacier 1 and 2 wind farms are still being taxed at 50 percent of their value, which will continue until 2014. After that year, the wind farms' tax is phased in by 10 percent each year until it is taxed at 100 percent of its value, explained Jackson.

The county sees no affect of the Rim Rock Wind Farm yet. "Until they actually get something out there that's taxable (Rim Rock Wind Farm) is not going to matter" on the county's tax value. "You won't see anything until probably not even next year, but the year after that," Jackson estimated.

One area with some change in tax revenues is the local oil and gas industry. Omimex Canada, Ltd was the 18th highest taxpayer in Toole County last year and is the ninth highest this year. MCR, LLC is number 20 this year and was 22nd last year.

Gene Walborn at the Montana Department of Revenue (DOR) explained this is not based upon the amount of oil and gas produced by Omimex and MCR but may reflect new production. Walborn said oil and gas companies report on production amounts to the state on a quarterly basis. The state taxes the companies, and part of that is returned to the county where production took place.

But, Walborn added, increased property taxes paid by oil and gas companies may indicate infrastructure construction associated with producing wells, such as pipelines, for example, as well as the purchase of more property or improvements on the property.

Jackson explained the increase in taxable value is due mostly to the State of Montana's reappraisal of centrally assessed properties. Taxpayers with properties spanning several counties, such as Glacier 1 and 2 wind farms, BNSF Railway, Northwestern Energy and Corrections Corp. of America, are centrally assessed by the DOR, said Jackson. "Some of those assessments went up this year pretty significantly, but for what reason? I don't know," he said.

Jackson said the Department of Revenue reappraised some properties and "tried to mitigate (the increase in taxable value) by lowering the tax rate, so the tax rate is actually going down because taxable values are going up," he explained.

"The state dropped rates when they reappraised property," he continued. The drop in rates will be phased in through 2014. The tax rate will drop approximately 2.7 percent each year on class three and four properties, which includes homes and small businesses.

The top 10 taxpayers in Toole County changed very little from last year, but combined they paid nearly \$500,000 more, from \$4,554.205.29 to \$4,956,638.85.

They are:

- 1. NaturEner Glacier Wind 1, LLC, \$1,777,415.04;
- 2. BNSF Railway Co, \$892,973.06;
- 3. NaturEner Glacier Wind 2, LLC, \$714,353.51;
- 4. Northwestern Corp Transmission and Distribution, \$685,162.47;
- 5. Corrections Corp of America, \$450,133.89;
- 6. Front Range Pipeline LLC, \$126,245.15;
- 7. Marias River Electric Cooperative, Inc, \$100,222.93;
- 8. Qwest Corporation, \$75,956.50;
- 9. Omimex Canada, Ltd, \$67,798.23;
- 10. Rimrock Colony, Inc., \$66,378.07.

Copyright © 2011 Shelby Promoter, All rights reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Briana Wipf, 'County's taxable value up; majority of tax bills unchanged', *Shelby Promoter* (online), 2 Nov 2011 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/167F1F7E974E85B0



Rockies Healthcare invites you to annual Oktoberfest

September 14, 2011 | Cut Bank Pioneer Press (MT) Author: Linda Bruch | Section: News | 698 Words OpenURL Link

For many, October is the perfect time of year. Harvest concludes, the hot days of summer settle into the cooler days of fall, gardens and flowers take a rest and many of us feel we can finally do the same. It feels like a celebration is in the air. And so it is.

Rockies Healthcare Foundation plans on taking advantage of that celebratory feeling by hosting their second annual Oktoberfest on Saturday, Oct. 1.

"We are calling it our second annual Oktoberfest, even though it is more of a biannual event," said Robert Carette, President of the Rockies Healthcare Foundation. "But regardless of that, it is our biggest fundraiser of the year and by far the one we enjoy the most and hope the community does as well."

Organizers hope you mark your calendars now to attend this year's Oktoberfest, which is being held at the Joe Meagher Memorial Civic Center. Ticket prices are \$30 per person, which not only gets you in the door, but feeds you and entertains you as well. Tickets can be purchased at Billman's; Billman's Home Décor; Bank of Glacier County; Dye, Tavary and Judge or by calling Donna Jacobsen at 229-0261.

Doors open at 5:30 p.m. with a no host cocktail hour where the beverages will be mixed by The Den and BJ's. At 6 p.m., a dinner of bratwurst and burgers with all the trimmings will be served. And at 7 p.m., the entertainment for the evening starts when the Tommy Rocker Band takes the stage.

In between sets and breaks the band takes, a live auction will take place and items from the silent auction table will also be called and awarded to the highest bidder.

"Tommy Rocker owns a couple restaurants in Las Vegas and does some live shows there entertaining the crowds with Jimmy Buffet kind of music. Part of his act includes some sing-alongs and comedy," said Carette. "It should be a great show and a great evening."

During the evening, both a live and silent auction will take place. Two of the live auction items are a trip to Orlando with accommodations at a time-share condominium and a tour of the NaturEner Glacier Wind Farm. Silent auction items include guilts, gift baskets, food, woodworking items, tools and so much more.

"This is our major fundraiser for the year," said Carette. "From this event we hope to raise enough money to build up our operation fund, add to our endowment fund and be able to supply the hospital with some of their immediate equipment needs as well."

Two years ago when the Rockies Healthcare Foundation held their last Oktoberfest, it was not only well attended, but donations went well too. "We brought in just over \$20,000 that year and would like to hit that target again this year," Carette said. "Expenses are a bit higher this year, but we are hoping to come close to that dollar amount again."

Helping the Foundation reach that goal are several general and prime event sponsors who have made donations of either \$500 or \$1,000. The general and prime event sponsors this year are Stockman Bank; Rockies Healthcare Foundation; Lantis Enterprises; Mountain View Energy; Quorum Health Resources; Edward Jones (Michael and Linda Bruch); Dye, Tavary and Judge; Kalispell Regional Medical Center and Glacier Motors Sale and Service.

"We couldn't do this event without those sponsors, so we would like to offer a special thanks to them," said Carette.

"Our board has been working hard this year too, so a thank you to them as well."

The Board of Directors for Rockies Healthcare Foundation include: Carette; Allison Harvie, Vice President; Jerry Ebelt, Secretary; Darrell Peterson, Treasurer; Donna Jacobsen, Event Chair; and directors Gladys Billman, Ray Christiaens, Jan Haemig, Dennis Marriage, Bonnie Sammons, Dale Smith and Cherie Taylor.

If you like the idea of doing a little celebrating in October, or perhaps just getting out to have a little fun, the Rockies Healthcare Foundation Oktoberfest, would be the right place to be and the best place to start. Join them on Oct. 1 for a great evening of entertainment and socializing with friends and neighbors.

"We hope people will come out for a cocktail, dance a little, enjoy dinner and see their friends after a long summer. It will be a fun night for everyone," said Carette.

Copyright © 2011 Cut Bank Pioneer Press, All rights reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Linda Bruch, 'Rockies Healthcare invites you to annual Oktoberfest', *Cut Bank Pioneer Press* (online), 14 Sep 2011 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/167F1C301C7AB9C8



NaturEner to construct new wind farm in Alberta, nearby Rim Rock project awaiting MATL approval

August 17, 2011 | Shelby Promoter (MT) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 384 Words OpenURL Link

Calgary-based NaturEner Energy Canada Inc., a renewable energy company, announced last week it received approval from the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) on Aug. 2, to construct and operate the 162 megawatt (MW) Wild Rose 2 Wind Power Project. Wild Rose 2 will be located on approximately 20,000 acres of private agricultural and grazing lands in Cypress County, Alberta.

"We are encouraged by the AUC's approval of Wild Rose 2. The approval is the result of years of exhaustive environmental studies, public and private consultation, wind resource assessments and technical reviews.

NaturEner is grateful for the tremendous support from landowners and regional organizations. We are excited about the opportunity to construct the Wild Rose projects," said Jose M Sanchez-Seara, Chief Executive Officer.

Bill Alexander, Chief Development Officer, stated, "NaturEner has been working very hard to construct its RimRock project in Montana and is disappointed that we are not able to give notice to proceed at this time as we had planned because of the announced delays of the construction of the transmission line under development by MATL. With the recent milestones achieved in Alberta, NaturEner is reviewing options to accelerate the Wild Rose projects. We are thrilled with the progress that has been made in our Canadian portfolio and remain committed to build in Montana when transmission becomes available."

With the approval of Wild Rose 2, NaturEner Canada now holds permits to construct wind energy projects in Alberta representing an aggregate of 375 MW. NaturEner Canada received approval to construct and operate the 204 MW Wild Rose 1 Wind Power Project, also located in Cypress County, in October 2010.

NaturEner US owns and operates the combined 210 MW Glacier Wind 1 & 2 projects, located near Ethridge, Montana. With the launch of the NaturEner Operations Center earlier this year, NaturEner is now managing and integrating all of the production from the Glacier projects through its unique wind only Balancing Authority, Power Watch.

The Operations Center is a fully enabled, state-of-the-art, 24/7, real-time desk located in NaturEner's San Francisco Headquarters.

The Operations Center was formed for the purpose of supporting both commercial and operational functions for NaturEner's operating projects and transmission assets, including NaturEner's firm transmission scheduling rights to import up to 300 MW of power into Alberta over the MATL line.

The AUC decision can be accessed at: www.auc.ab.ca/ Applications/decisions/

Decisions/2011/2011-329.pdf.

Copyright @ 2011 Shelby Promoter, All rights reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'NaturEner to construct new wind farm in Alberta, nearby Rim Rock project awaiting MATL approval', *Shelby Promoter* (online), 17 Aug 2011 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/167F1F7CD32D4188>



Guest column: Legislature attacks renewable energy, rural economic development

March 15, 2011 | Bozeman Daily Chronicle (MT) Author: Conor Darby, guest columnist| Section: Guest Columnists| 698 Words OpenURL Link

In 2005, the Montana Legislature adopted the Renewable Power Production and Rural Economic Development Act, sponsored by then-state Sen. Jon Tester. Also known as the Renewable Energy Standard, this act required the state's investor-owned utilities to obtain an increasing percentage of their power from renewable sources: 5 percent by 2008, 10 percent by 2010, and 15 percent by 2015.

This forward-thinking policy was based on the 2005 Legislature's belief that developing Montana's abundant renewable energy resources would create jobs, stimulate rural economic development, and enhance Montana's energy independence.

How right they were.

For example: NorthWestern Energy is meeting a portion of its Renewable Energy Standard through a contract with the 135-megawatt Judith Gap Wind Farm in Wheatland County. The Judith Gap Wind Farm created 200 construction jobs and now employs 12 people full-time. Economic benefits - including tax revenues, wages and royalties for landowners - have totaled more than \$28 million.

And NorthWestern Energy ratepayers have benefitted as well: According to a 2010 NorthWestern Energy filing, power from the Judith Gap Wind Farm is less costly than power from Colstrip, and less costly than the mix of coal and hydropower the utility purchases from PPL Montana, even when the costs of addressing wind's variability are taken into account.

Overall, nearly 400 megawatts of wind power have been constructed in Montana in recent years. In addition to the Judith Gap Wind Farm, projects include the Glacier Wind Farm in Toole and Glacier counties, the Horseshoe Bend Wind Farm near Great Falls, and the Diamond Willow Wind Farm near Baker. Several other wind farms totaling more than a billion dollars in private sector investments are in the planning stages.

Of course, Montana's renewable energy potential needs to be developed thoughtfully and responsibly. Impacts on the environment, electricity rates and the transmission system must be carefully considered for all energy development. But compared to fossil fuels, the benefits of responsible renewable energy development are huge: three times as many jobs per dollar invested, according to the Political Economy Research Institute. The U.S. Department of Energy found that the wind industry has the potential to create 2,800 long-term jobs in Montana, while contributing millions of dollars to the local tax base. Thanks to the Renewable Energy Standard, we are well on our way to realizing this vision.

But Montana's emerging renewable energy economy is under attack in Helena. Several legislators have proposed bills that would hinder the development of Montana's renewable energy resources by weakening the Renewable Energy Standard.

For example, Senate Bill 330, sponsored by Sen. Edward Walker (R-Billings), would give utilities an easy out from complying with the standard by making waivers much easier to obtain. Senate Bill 109, sponsored by Sen. Debby Barrett (R-Dillon), would weaken the standard by allowing all hydropower projects that began operation after 2005 to qualify as "renewable." Large hydroelectric power plants are a long-established form of power generation that just don't need this type of support - so the real effect of SB 109 would be to decrease the incentive for any new wind or solar development. House Bill 237, sponsored by Rep. Mike Menahan (D-Helena), would eliminate the requirement that utilities obtain a specified amount of renewable energy from locally-owned projects. This "community renewables" provision of the Renewable Energy Standard ensures that more of the profits from

renewable energy projects stay in Montana.

Even worse, House Bill 244, sponsored by Rep. Derek Skees (R-Whitefish), would have repealed the Renewable Energy Standard outright. Thankfully, a bipartisan majority of the House Federal Relations, Energy, and Telecommunications Committee saw the folly of HB 244 and defeated it in committee.

Our legislators have stated over and over that the main focus of the 2011 legislative session is jobs. Yet their attempts to weaken the Renewable Energy Standard would hinder economic development and job creation in Montana. The 2005 Legislature put Montana on a path to prosperity and energy independence by passing the Renewable Power Production and Rural Economic Development Act. Let's hope the 2011 Legislature doesn't derail our progress.

Conor Darby is general manager of Independent Power Systems in Bozeman and president of the Montana Renewable Energy Association.

Copyright 2011 The Bozeman Daily Chronicle. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Copyright (c) 2011 Bozeman Daily Chronicle

• Citation (aglc Style)

Conor Darby, guest columnist, 'Guest column: Legislature attacks renewable energy, rural economic development', *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* (online), 15 Mar 2011 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/135FEABC4829A538>



Renewable energy discussion Wednesday

February 1, 2011 | Independent Record (Helena, MT) Author: Gabriel Furshong - Letter to the Editor | Section: Reader's Alley | 200 Words OpenURL Link

Montana ranks fifth among states for wind-power potential. In 2005, the state legislature put our wind to work by passing the Renewable Energy Standard. Since then, many projects have plugged into the grid, including the new 200-megawatt Glacier Wind Farm near Shelby.

But now, some legislators are threatening to curb our wind potential. Derek Skees, R-Whitefish, is pushing House Bill 244 to repeal the Renewable Energy Standard. Debbie Barrett, R-Dillon, is pushing Senate Bill 109, which would count old hydroelectric dams as "renewable" projects. These bills would kill new jobs in rural communities and increase U.S. dependence on foreign energy.

On Wednesday, Feb. 2, two U.S. military experts, Col. Robert Charette Jr., with the U.S. Marine Corps, and Vice Admiral Dennis McGinn (Ret.) of the U.S. Navy will address the importance of homegrown, renewable energy to our national security. The event begins at 7 p.m. in Room 303 of the state Capitol.

I encourage those who care about the energy future of our country to attend this important discussion. And I encourage those who care about the energy future of Montana to help stop Derek Skees and Debbie Barrett from killing new jobs and curbing our wind potential.

Gabriel Furshong

Missoula

Copyright (c) 2011 Independent Record

• Citation (aglc Style)

Gabriel Furshong - Letter to the Editor, 'Renewable energy discussion Wednesday', *Independent Record* (online), 1 Feb 2011 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/135206D7FA51FE20



Renewable Portfolio Standard crucial part of Montana's energy and economic development

November 12, 2010 | Independent Record (Helena, MT) Author: BOB ANDERSON - IR Your Turn| Section: Reader's Alley | 656 Words OpenURL Link

Recent articles covering the sparring between Public Service Commission candidates suggest that Montana's renewable energy success is about politics or philosophy. It's not — it's about jobs and economic advantages for our state.

The expansion of the renewable energy industry in Montana, stimulated by the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS), has brought significant economic growth, job creation, tax revenue and new opportunities for our communities. Furthermore, it is good for our natural environment, saving valuable water resources while reducing pollution. Building on that success, it is critical that our elected officials strengthen supportive policies that help realize Montana's renewable energy potential and economic recovery.

Montanans deserve the facts about energy and our state economy, which are too often lost in political rhetoric. The renewable industry is the largest economic development promise in our state.

- Fact: Renewable energy projects mean jobs for Montanans. On average, a 100-megawatt wind energy project supports 200 construction jobs and 8-11 permanent O&M jobs. Judith Gap currently employs 12 full-time staff. Seveny-five percent of the construction costs for building Judith Gap went to Montana-based contractors. Glacier Wind phases 1 and 2 each generated 150 construction jobs and each currently employ 10 full-time staff.
- Fact: It is false that adding renewable power to the mix increases energy rates for Montana customers. Investments in renewable resources are least cost and least risk for long-term stability. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that, on average, state Renewable Portfolio Standards will have a negligible impact on rates (38 cents a month/household) and may even decrease rates over the long run. The Judith Gap wind project serving Montana customers is a proven cost-effective project at \$41.60 per MWh. By comparison, the average price of the PPL-MT contracts serving NorthWestern Energy customers is \$49.90 per MWh.
- Fact: Clean, homegrown energy is a safe bet for the Montana work force. Renewable energy also supports manufacturing jobs. For example, nearly 400 American manufacturing facilities are making wind components. Data from the International Trade Commission (ITC) shows that less than 5 percent of the value of turbine parts used in the U.S. is imported from China. General Electric, the turbine supplier for Judith Gap, is the No. 1 wind turbine manufacturer in North America.
- Fact: Farmers and ranchers in Montana can prosper by leasing their land for renewable projects (\$4,500-\$10,000 per turbine per year). They can continue traditional ways of harvesting the resources of their land while bringing new opportunities into the mix.
- Fact: The average wind project represents more than a billion dollars of local capital investment and millions of dollars in new local property tax revenues. Glacier Wind phase 1 and 2 represent \$450 million in capital investment and will pay \$4 million to Glacier and Toole counties in 2010. The Judith Gap wind farm pays Wheatland County over \$1 million a year in taxes and fees.

The state and local benefits from the Judith Gap wind farm over its five-year life thus far are real and significant, totaling over \$25 million thus far. The planned 309 MW Rim Rock project will bring another \$700 million in local capital investment, 450 constructions jobs, and 30 permanent local jobs to Glacier and Toole Counties.

Montana's RPS, which requires regulated utilities to generate 15 percent of their power through renewable sources by 2015, is an inseparable factor in our state's success at attracting our nation's fastest growing energy industry.

Had it not been for this supportive policy, our state may not have seemed viable for renewable energy companies and the jobs they bring to our workforce. Our RPS made it loud and clear that Montana means business.

While political candidates' views may vary, the best bet for Montanans is clear: doing business with renewable energy companies supports jobs, private landowners and rural communities, and we need the Public Service Commission to continue its commitment to the kinds of policies that attract their business.

Bob Anderson formerly served as a commissioner with the Public Service Commission and is presently director of the Western Grid Group.

Copyright (c) 2010 Independent Record

• Citation (aglc Style)

BOB ANDERSON - IR Your Turn, 'Renewable Portfolio Standard crucial part of Montana's energy and economic development', Independent Record (online), 12 Nov 2010 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/13375E61589F5C28>



Blowin' in the Wind

October 17, 2010 | Billings Gazette, The (MT)

Section: Business | 1469 Words

OpenURL Link

Muneyoshi Shibagaki is in the habit of waking early each morning and taking a walk. And one of those morning walks, taken in Billings earlier this year, confirmed his commitment to bring business to Billings.

Shibagaki is president of Taisei Techno, a Japanese firm that recently entered the wind turbine business. According to Masahiro Sano, a consultant for Taisei Techno, Shibagaki was so taken by the friendly people he met on his stroll that he was convinced he'd made the right choice. He'd selected Billings, and more specifically Montana State University Billings College of Technology, as the premiere site for the company's wind turbine venture in the United States.

"He was surprised that every person he met on the street said 'hello' and 'good morning'," said Sano, who was back in Billings at the end of September. "That wouldn't happen in New York or Chicago. He had a very good feeling about the people here."

The greetings and smiles could prove even more fortuitous for Billings. If all goes as hoped, Taisei Techno's current partnership with several local firms may one day transform the city into the company's American hub for wind turbine manufacture.

Chance meeting

The Taisei-Billings connection traces back to a chance meeting in February 2009, when Rhyno Stinchfield, president of the Billings-based GreenWorld Partners, met Sano at a renewable energy conference in Las Vegas. Over the ensuing year, the business relationship evolved, culminating in Taisei Techno naming Stinchfield as its agent in the United States.

The designation set Stinchfield in motion. In a matter of months, he had lined up the COT and three Billings companies — Roscoe Steel, Krivonen Associates Structural Consultants, and CEI Electrical Contractors — to partner in a test program for Taisei Techno's new-fangled wind turbine. It would be the first on American soil.

"Other turbine manufacturers are looking to enter the U.S. market," Stinchfield said. "But this is the first I know of a Japanese manufacturer.

The 42-foot, 10-kilowatt wind turbine soon to be installed at the COT campus will generate power for the school and opportunities for students enrolled in the school's brand-new alternative energy program. It has already generated work for three local firms and, should the test prove successful, it offers the potential for much more business to come.

"Our goal is to start marketing wind turbines here in Montana before going to a nationwide business," Sano said.
"We plan to purchase the parts locally as much as possible."

An eco symbol

During its 55 years of existence, Taisei Techno has evolved into a high tech company specializing in electronic equipment for Japan's bullet trains. Recently, Taisei Techno has developed systems that monitor the conditions in passenger rail cars. Because the innovations deal with air movement, Sano said the jump to wind turbines is not much of a stretch.

In Japan, Taisei Techno erected its first "mini" turbine at one of the nation's 1,300 train stations. The small, 400-watt turbine was less an energy endeavor than a symbol of the rail company's eco consciousness. Because the wind turbine is such a visible "green" symbol, Sano said, the rail company began working with Taisei to install similar small turbines at more stations.

"There is no market in Japan for a 5 kilowatt or 10 kilowatt machine," he said. "It may intimidate your neighbor."

Different design

But Taisei Techno sees the turbines as more than just eco image. The unique design, developed by the company's patent-holder Tsuneo Noguchi, calls for a vertical-axis turbine with blades modeled after airplane wings. The unusual design allows the turbines to spin at low speeds and rotate in just about any wind direction. Touting less noise and less wear on bearings, the application could serve well in urban or residential areas, they say. Taisei Techno envisions marketing the turbines to individuals or even individual companies.

"They could go in a Walmart parking lot or an office building and produce usable power," Stinchfield said.

The turbine that will soon be erected in Billings — Sano says they anticipate installation in December, with operations soon to follow and interim efficiency results available by March — is currently standing on a street corner in Tokyo.

"The actual turbine will be disassembled and then reassembled in Billings," Stinchfield said.

In fact, should the venture prove commercially viable, a similar plan would guide business in Montana. As Stinchfield explains it, there may be no need for an actual Taisei Techno manufacturing plant here. Instead, the Billings businesses would produce the parts and provide the knowhow for turbine kits that would be shipped to all points.

"They would be site assembled," Stinchfield said. "This would be the point of distribution."

Palpable energy

On a Thursday morning in the waning days of September, seven local businessmen, Sano and another Taisei Technor rep brainstormed together in a conference room at Roscoe Steel. As they swapped ideas on the final test turbine, their combined energy was palpable.

"The local business people, they are very friendly, qualified and flexible," Sano said.

Matt Krivonen, co-owner and structural engineer for Krivonen Associates in Billings, is refining the design of the metal frame that will house the wind turbine.

"Rarely do you have that type of atmosphere in the design room," he said. "There are a lot of good ideas. I think it makes for a better product."

Wind turbines aside, Krivonen Associates has already dabbled beyond typical structural engineering. The company has designed floating islands for rare bird habitat and wave breakers that protect the shorelines from wave action. But with the business riding a roller coaster lately, "We're looking for projects to tide us over," Krivonen said.

The best shot

Working shoulder to shoulder with Krivonen and the Taisei Techno reps were Corey Sell, vice president of CEl Electrical Contractors, and Bill Lundberg, president and COO of Roscoe Steel.

CEI Electrical has considerable experience in utility scale wind projects, having worked on both the Judith Gap Wind

Farm and the Glacier Wind Farm outside Shelby, along with several other out-of-state ventures.

The design and size of the turbine differ from CEI's experience, but Sell's interest is clearly piqued.

"The jury's still out but they've got some history," he said. "And some of these smaller turbines I think make sense."

CEI is serving as the general contractor for the COT turbine, which means the company is working on the foundation, the electrical system and installation of the turbine itself.

Sell and CEI Electrical look at the proposition as a good opportunity with the potential to grow in a market that's already caught their attention. If the company mushrooms, "we're at a good spot," he said.

For that reason, Sell sees success of the first turbine as a critical step.

"Our biggest role is that they get the best shot they can, that it goes without a hitch," he said.

In partnership

With design details nearing completion, Roscoe Steel is poised to fabricate the structure that will support the Taisei Techno turbine. Lundberg concurs that the joint venture has been a positive exercise.

Such partnerships are not new, he said, but they are not common. He cites collaboration on the Billings Hilton Garden Inn, another project that benefitted from businesses partnering together.

"The hotel was opened much sooner that if it had followed the traditional path," he said.

Like Sell, Lundberg sees the test turbine as a good opportunity. Roscoe Steel, of the three Billings businesses involved, likely stands to benefit most.

Though Taisei Techno's hopes of expansion still rest on the success of the test turbine, Roscoe Steel would like to be the supplier of choice. Whether that translates into more jobs — the company cut positions in April but is hiring again — Lundberg can't say for certain.

"But we see it as a great opportunity in a field that will certainly grow with time," he said.

Meanwhile, as installation of the test turbine nears, Shibagaki has already scheduled his next trip to Billings.

"And when they come for the ribbon-cutting," Stinchfield said, "(Shibagaki's) wife insisted she get to come, too."

Copyright (c) 2010 The Billings Gazette

• Citation (aglc Style)

'Blowin' in the Wind', *Billings Gazette, The* (online), 17 Oct 2010 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/132EB7A6A1E18DB0>



Gov, first lady traveling to Spain, Israel on biz recruiting mission

October 6, 2010 | Independent Record (Helena, MT) Author: IR State Bureau | Section: State | 367 Words OpenURL Link

Gov. Brian Schweitzer and First Lady Nancy Schweitzer left Monday for a trip to Israel and Spain to meet with business executives and government officials.

They are traveling as part of a delegation with the Solomon Project, a Washington, D.C., nonprofit group that takes government, business and academic leaders to Israel on educational missions. The Solomon Project is funding the entire trip, which ends Oct. 16.

"This is an opportunity to build and grow businesses in Montana and create more high-paying jobs for workers in our state," Schweitzer said. "I have been actively recruiting companies to Montana, and this is a great opportunity to bring more business to our state."

Schweitzer will spend two days in Spain. Besides meeting with U.S. Ambassador Alan Solomont, Schweitzer will visit with officials from companies involved in Montana. They include Elecnor SA and Enerfin, which are working with Grasslands Renewable Energy LLC, a Montana firm, on renewable energy transmission line development, pump storage and the Sweet Grass/Coyote Wind farm.

He also will meet with officials from Grupo NaturEner SA and NaturEner USA LLC, which is the largest wind farm developer in Montana with the Glacier Wind Farm, a 210-megawatt wind farm located between Shelby and Cut Bank. NaturEner also is moving forward on the Rimrock Project, a 309-megawatt wind farm that will use the Montana Alberta Tie Line when construction of both projects is complete.

The delegation will be in Israel for a week of meetings, including those with Benjamin Netanyahu, prime minister of Israel and Shimon Peres, president of Israel.

Schweitzer also will meet with Salam Fayyad, prime minister of Palestinian National Authority; the Department of Agriculture; Eyal Erlich, who is interested in buying Montana cattle; Moshe Bornstein, president and CEO of National Coal Supply Corp., which is interested in buying Montana coal; Dan Meridor, minster of intelligence and atomic energy; James Cunningham, U.S. ambassador to Israel; Ormat Technologies Inc., a geothermal company; and Zenith Solar and Better Place, electric vehicle networks and services.

The Solomon Project did not respond to a reporter's inquiry about the estimated cost of the Schweitzers' trip or what officials from other states are traveling with them. No Montana state employees are accompanying the governor and first lady, said Schweitzer's spokeswoman, Sarah Elliott.

Copyright (c) 2010 Independent Record

• Citation (aglc Style)

IR State Bureau, 'Gov, first lady traveling to Spain, Israel on biz recruiting mission', *Independent Record* (online), 6 Oct 2010 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/132B20AD1C1748C0



Schweitzer traveling to Spain, Israel

October 5, 2010 | Billings Gazette, The (MT) Section: Montana | 369 Words OpenURL Link

HELENA — Gov. Brian and first lady Nancy Schweitzer left Monday on a trip to Israel and Spain to meet with business executives and government officials.

They are traveling as part of a delegation with the Solomon Project, a Washington, D.C., nonprofit group that takes government, business and academic leaders to Israel on educational missions. The Solomon Project is funding the entire trip, which ends Oct. 16.

"This is an opportunity to build and grow businesses in Montana and create more high-paying jobs for workers in our state," Schweitzer said. "I have been actively recruiting companies to Montana, and this is a great opportunity to bring more business to our state."

Schweitzer will spend two days in Spain. Besides meeting with U.S. Ambassador Alan Solomont, Schweitzer will visit with officials from companies involved in Montana. They include Elecnor SA and Enerfin, which are working with Grasslands Renewable Energy LLC., a Montana firm, on renewable-energy transmission line development, pump storage and the Sweet Grass/Coyote Wind farm.

He also will meet with officials from Grupo NaturEner SA and NaturEner USA LLC, which is the largest wind farm developer in Montana with the Glacier Wind Farm, a 210 megawatt wind farm located between Shelby and Cut Bank. NaturEner also is moving forward on the Rimrock Project, a 309-megawatt wind farm that will use the Montana Alberta Tie Line when construction of both projects in complete.

The delegation will be in Israel for a week of meetings, including those with Benjamin Netanyahu, prime minister of Israel and Shimon Peres, president of Israel.

Schweitzer also will meet with Salam Fayyad, prime minister of the Palestinian National Authority; the Department of Agriculture; Eyal Erlich, who is interested in buying Montana cattle; Moshe Bornstein, president and CEO of National Coal Supply Corp., which is interested in buying Montana coal; Dan Meridor, minster of intelligence and atomic energy; James Cunningham, U.S. ambassador to Israel; Ormat Technologies Inc., a geothermal company; and Zenith Solar and Better Place, electric vehicle networks and services.

The Solomon Project did not respond to a reporter's inquiry about the estimated cost of the Schweitzers' trip or what officials from other states are traveling with them. No Montana state employees are accompanying the governor and first lady, said Schweitzer's spokeswoman, Sarah Elliott.

Copyright (c) 2010 The Billings Gazette

Citation (aglc Style)

'Schweitzer traveling to Spain, Israel', *Billings Gazette, The* (online), 5 Oct 2010 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/132B19D6533F75B0



Schweitzer to visit Israel, Spain to meeting with business, government officials

October 5, 2010 | Missoulian (Missoula, MT)
Author: CHARLES S. JOHNSON Missoulian State Bureau missoulian.com| Section: Montana & Regional | 367 Words
OpenURL Link

HELENA - Gov. Brian and First Lady Nancy Schweitzer left Monday for a trip to Israel and Spain to meet with business executives and government officials.

They are traveling as part of a delegation with the Solomon Project, a Washington, D.C., nonprofit group that takes government, business and academic leaders to Israel on educational missions. The Solomon Project is funding the entire trip, which ends Oct. 16.

"This is an opportunity to build and grow businesses in Montana and create more high-paying jobs for workers in our state," Schweitzer said. "I have been actively recruiting companies to Montana, and this is a great opportunity to bring more business to our state."

Schweitzer will spend two days in Spain. Besides meeting with U.S. Ambassador Alan Solomont, Schweitzer will visit with officials from companies involved in Montana. They include Elecnor SA and Enerfin, which are working with Grasslands Renewable Energy LLC., a Montana firm, on renewable energy transmission line development, pump storage and the Sweet Grass/Coyote Wind farm.

He also will meet with officials from Grupo NaturEner SA and NaturEner USA LLC, which is the largest wind farm developer in Montana with the Glacier Wind Farm, a 210-megawatt wind farm located between Shelby and Cut Bank. NaturEner also is moving forward on the Rimrock Project, a 309-megawatt wind farm that will use the Montana Alberta Tie Line when construction of both projects is complete.

The delegation will be in Israel for a week of meetings, including those with Benjamin Netanyahu, prime minister of Israel and Shimon Peres, president of Israel.

Schweitzer also will meet with Salam Fayyad, prime minister of Palestinian National Authority; the Department of Agriculture; Eyal Erlich, who is interested in buying Montana cattle; Moshe Bornstein, president and CEO of National Coal Supply Corp., which is interested in buying Montana coal; Dan Meridor, minister of intelligence and atomic energy; James Cunningham, U.S. ambassador to Israel; Ormat Technologies Inc., a geothermal company; and Zenith Solar and Better Place, electric vehicle networks and services.

The Solomon Project did not respond to a reporter's inquiry about the estimated cost of the Schweitzers' trip or what officials from other states are traveling with them. No Montana state employees are accompanying the governor and first lady, said Schweitzer's spokeswoman, Sarah Elliott.

Copyright (c) 2010 Missoulian

• Citation (aglc Style)

CHARLES S. JOHNSON Missoulian State Bureau missoulian.com, 'Schweitzer to visit Israel, Spain to meeting with business, government officials', *Missoulian* (online), 5 Oct 2010 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/132B1F16686DBB40>



Commissioners: Budget will not increase county taxes

September 22, 2010 | Cut Bank Pioneer Press (MT) Author: LeAnne Kavanagh | Section: News | 481 Words OpenURL Link

Glacier County's certified taxable value went up a little in 2010 thanks to the "newly taxable property" at the Glacier Wind Farm. The 2010 Taxable Value is \$22,265,100, compared with last year's figure of \$21,022,366.

According to Montana Department of Revenue's Chuck Pankratz, Region 2 Manager based in Great Falls, the taxable value of newly taxable property in Glacier County is up by nearly \$2 million. This year, that figure is \$2,630,170 and last year it was \$751,908. After checking with state officials in Helena, Pankratz said "it appears the newly taxable increase for Glacier County is based mostly on the new wind farms (in the county) that went online."

The Glacier County Commissioners opened the public hearing on the county's 2010-11 final budget last week and will continue to take public input on the budget until Sept. 30. The commissioners plan to adopt the final budget at 11:30 that day.

Glacier County Clerk and Recorder Glenda Hall attributed the increase in the county's overall market value to the reappraisal of property that went into effect this year. Last year the total market value of the property was \$455,221,822, while this year it is at \$565,148,726.

The commissioners stated they do not anticipate the proposed county budget will have an adverse affect on taxpayers. They foresee no tax increase, despite having to use \$383,000 from the county's general fund and PILT (payment in lieu of taxes) money to balance the county's public safety budget.

The commissioners and Glacier County Sheriff Wayne Dusterhoff spent considerable time reviewing the sheriff's budget in recent months and have determined some grants received by the sheriff's office may not be cost-effective. Some grants do not cover all expenses associated with the grant, which negatively impacts the sheriff's budget, explained the commissioners.

Dusterhoff and the commissioners are not filling two vacant deputies positions, which should save the county approximately \$125,000.

The county commissioners, acting on the recommendation of the Glacier County Compensation Board, voted to freeze wages for county employees for the 2010-11 fiscal year. The commissioners did agree to increase the monthly insurance premium benefit of county employees to cover the 12 percent hike in the county's plan. The monthly benefit will go from \$600 to \$675 per month.

At last week's budget hearing, the commissioners did express some concerns about various county roads that are being impacted by the oil and gas exploration in the county. Glacier County Commission Chairman Michael DesRosier said the county is exploring how to assess impact fees, similar to what NaturEner paid for the wind farm, which would act as a "damage deposit" or reserve to cover the added expense of maintaining or fixing damaged roads.

The commissioners said they were warned by their peers in eastern Montana about this problem and are working with some of their fellow county commissioners in other parts of the state to address the issue.

Copyright @ 2010 Cut Bank Pioneer Press, All rights reserved.

https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/167F1C2818C6B278



Governor comes to town to tour MATL construction site

September 22, 2010 | Shelby Promoter (MT) Author: Chris Muller | Section: News | 905 Words

OpenURL Link

Governor Brian Schweitzer was in Toole and Glacier Counties last week, touring the Montana Alberta Tie Limited (MATL) construction site. The Governor, accompanied by Shelby Mayor Larry Bonderud and Toole County Commissioner Alan Underdal, witnessed a transmission pole placement by Rocky Mountain Contractors in rural Glacier County.

It was the Governor's first visit to the MATL construction site.

Governor Schweitzer feels the MATL transmission line, which is being built in Alberta and Montana, will have positive economic effects for residents of counties in Montana.

"When I was elected Governor, Montana had less than one megawatt of electricity being produced with wind energy," he said. "Now we've increased our portfolio with the fastest rate in the country. It's great for the tax base in the counties. It's great for the construction jobs and ultimately there are long-term jobs that are maintaining these transmission lines and these wind farms. It's good for business in Montana."

Gov. Schweitzer feels landowners who are opposed to the MATL project should realize that MATL officials have been very accommodating.

"When farmers said that 'we don't want to farm around these things', MATL said 'Well, let's have fewer poles," he said. "When farmers said 'our fields are running north and south perpendicular to the prevailing winds-do you think you can run north and south so it would be less disruptive?' MATL said 'Yes, I suppose we could do that.' There are still people against it, but honest to God we all at some point decided we wanted electricity. Just about everybody in Montana has electricity, and that electricity came from someplace else,' said the Governor.

"Each time we built a new generator facility or a new community or a new farm got electricity there was a transmission line. This construction is just all part of the progress. If we are going to break our addiction to foreign energy, this is one of the solutions."

Bonderud sided with Gov. Schweitzer.

"He's been very supportive of the MATL project and the regulatory review," said Bonderud. "Montanans need to understand how important transmission is. Without transmission, you're not going to have wind farms. The MATL project is the very first power line in the history of Montana where a property owner gets paid every year forever. That's how the MATL line is different."

Bonderud continued, "The metal poles that are used have a thousand foot span average. So when you think about farming around them, that is done to try to minimize the impacts on the land and on the farmer who may have to farm around them. Plus, the farmer is getting paid for the inconvenience per pole per year to farm around them."

Bonderud pointed out because of these reasons, there is a tremendous amount of consideration given to the landowners involved in the route.

"When you hear about people that say 'you are infringing upon my wetlands here or there' the environmental folks at the Department of Environmental Quality picked the route that was the least obtrusive and caused the least amount of impact for the whole site. So MATL is kind of trapped in that 'they'd love to accommodate you' but we can't go outside of that 500-foot corridor."

Bonderud continued, "Not only that, when the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) came in and financed a portion of the project, they were prohibited from talking to property owners earlier because of the Federal standards for right-of-way acquisition. It's an absolute prohibition for them to have any contact with that property owner until all the steps the federal government makes MATL go through."

Bonderud also believes the MATL project will trigger a tremendous amount of economic activity.

"It's just phenomenal," he said "It's going to help our tax base. We welcome the impact that it will have on our county."

James Wood, general foreman for Rocky Mountain Contractors, agrees with both Governor Schweitzer and Mayor Bonderud on the MATL project having tremendous trickle-down economic effects for both Glacier and Toole Counties.

"By the time we are completely geared up we will have 100 plus guys here," he said. "Just from our prospective, what it's bringing in to these counties is we'll have the hotel rents and apartment rentals. We try to do all our shopping local with the hardware stores. We buy all our fuel here. We do bring in a lot of money to the community. So far the local businesses have been real supportive of us."

Tom Kaiserski, Program Manager for the Energy Promotion and Development Division, was also present for the tour and encouraged the construction of the MATL project.

"The major benefit is going to come from the wind farm development that will occur as a result of this line going in," he said. "Take for example, the existing Glacier Wind Farm. That's 210 megawatts. That's over \$500 million invested and bringing one and a half to two million (dollars) in property taxes a year to the area. This line is going to enable right away a 309-megawatt requirement so you're talking about two million plus in property taxes a year coming from that line," said Kaiserski.

"MATL will create 30 permanent jobs to maintain this line. The Rimrock Wind Farm that is going to be connected to this line is going to create 30 jobs of it's own so that is solid economic development," he added.

Mayor Bonderud considered the Governor's visit to the construction site time well spent.

"We appreciate the Governor coming up and calling attention to the project," he said.

Copyright © 2010 Shelby Promoter, All rights reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Chris Muller, 'Governor comes to town to tour MATL construction site', *Shelby Promoter* (online), 22 Sep 2010 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/167F1F7697E347B8



Montana lagging behind in wind power development ... Why?

July 25, 2010 | Billings Gazette, The (MT)
Author: MIKE DENNISON Gazette State Bureau | Section: Montana | 1112 Words
OpenURL Link

HELENA — When it comes to wind power in Montana, there's plenty of talk of the coming boom — but as Montana talks, nearby states have sprinted ahead in actual development of wind projects.

Since Democrat Brian Schweitzer became governor in 2005, Montana has gone from virtually no functioning wind farms to a respectable 375 megawatts of wind power produced in the state as of May this year.

Yet during that same time period, Wyoming, North Dakota, Oregon, Washington and Minnesota have each added two, three or four times as much wind power production.

And then there's Iowa, which added more than 3,000 megawatts. In 2008 and 2009 alone, 37 new wind power projects came on line in Iowa, compared to just three in Montana.

So, what gives in the "Saudi Arabia of wind," as wind power advocates sometimes speak of Montana?

Developers and boosters of wind power say the major stumbling block continues to be a lack of adequate transmission lines, needed to move wind power within the state and beyond its borders, to urban marketplaces that want renewable power.

Other factors include simple geography — Montana remains far from major markets, and its small population will never be a huge consumer of wind power — and the slowness of local utilities to add wind power to their electricity mix.

Even the biggest boosters of wind power acknowledge that it may take a few more years before things really take off here. Yet they remain optimistic that regional demand for renewable power and Montana's excellent wind "resource" eventually will create that long-awaited boom in the state's windy prairies.

"Montana is moving faster than our neighbors on transmission," said Gov. Schweitzer. "No place else has the quality of wind that we have. ... The interest in Montana projects has just exploded in recent years."

At least a dozen serious developers are examining potential wind projects in Montana. Only one major project, however, has been built since 2005: the 210-megawatt Glacier Wind Farm near Cut Bank, developed by the Spanish firm NaturEner, which sells the power to San Diego Gas & Electric.

This summer, construction is beginning on the 214-mile Montana-Alberta Tie power line (MATL), running north from Great Falls into Alberta. It creates a new path for wind power developers to feed their power into the Western grid.

MATL could enable a 300-megawatt expansion of NaturEner's wind farm north of Cut Bank, creating a transmission path for the power.

Ten days ago, San Diego Gas & Electric asked the California Public Utilities Commission to approve its proposed \$600 million financing of the project, with the aim of starting construction by the end of 2012. The commission probably won't act on the utility's request until next year.

At least five other major power line projects that hope to transport wind power are in various stages of development in Montana.

One is from Grasslands Renewable Energy, a Bozeman firm proposing to string lines across Montana and into Canada, North Dakota and Wyoming. The \$2.5 billion to \$3 billion proposal also includes a hydroelectric project near Martinsdale that could balance and store wind power, helping offset problems caused by the intermittent nature of wind.

Carl Borgquist, president of the firm, said 10 wind power developers have signed letters of intent to work with Grasslands, paying a small deposit. Yet bringing such projects forward takes years, he says, and a creditworthy customer to buy the power.

"That's the place that a lot of these transmission-and-distribution projects are right now: What are we going to build? Where are we going to build it? And who are the customers going to be?" he said.

Rhyno Stinchfield, chief executive officer of Montana Wind Resources in Billings, said development of wind farms and transmission lines in Montana is moving on "parallel tracks," making it hard to predict when they'll come together.

"Once transmission gets here, we have a lot to provide," said Stinchfield, whose company hopes to develop several medium to large wind farms. "But we're kind of the last to come on line. ... There is kind of a tipping point out there with people saying, 'Do we want renewable energy?' The question is how much is it going to cost and how quickly can we bring it online."

Right now, wind-generated power is usually more expensive than electricity from sources like coal, hydro and natural gas.

At the same time, most states in the West, including Montana, are requiring utilities to sell a minimum of renewable power, such as wind.

Montana Public Service Commissioner Brad Molnar, R-Laurel, a frequent critic of wind power, said he believes the market for wind power "is dropping like a rock" because the price of natural gas has plummeted and people don't want to pay for more expensive wind if they don't have to.

It's up to wind power developers to show that their electricity is a good deal and as reliable as other power, without government subsidies or promotion, he said.

Wind power enthusiasts, however, say public policy already is heading toward promoting more renewable and less fossil-fuel power, positioning Montana as an inevitable supplier of wind power. And wind power should become relatively cheaper over time, they say.

"With a wind farm, you know what it costs to operate for the next 30 years," pointed out Matt Jennings, vice president of government relations for Grasslands. "The cost of other power is extremely volatile."

Mark Jacobson, director of business development for Invenergy, which has developed 20 wind-power projects in the West, including the 135-megawatt Judith Gap project in central Montana, said some of Montana's neighbors have had advantages that Montana can't really match.

For example, Minnesota, Iowa and North Dakota are in a power grid better able to incorporate wind power and are close to huge consumer markets like Chicago and Minneapolis-St. Paul, he said.

Also, Wyoming had ample transmission capacity in an area that PacifiCorp, a major utility company, chose to put up several wind farms in recent years, while Oregon and Washington have the Bonneville Power Administration, a federal power agency that has had ample amounts of hydropower to help balance intermittent wind power, industry officials say.

Yet they also say Montana has enacted positive policies to encourage development of wind projects and power

lines, such as property tax reductions and the state's renewable-power requirements.

"The governor and people in Montana are doing everything they can to make it happen," said Rob McFarlane, chief business officer for Tonbridge Power, the Canadian firm building the MATL line. "I think Montana will get there. I think wind will become a major resource in Montana."

"There is movement," added Stinchfield. "There needs to be something out there that breaks this dam. ... We're moving forward every day. We don't feel like it's a standstill, by any means."

Copyright (c) 2010 The Billings Gazette

• Citation (aglc Style)

MIKE DENNISON Gazette State Bureau, 'Montana lagging behind in wind power development ...Why?', *Billings Gazette, The* (online), 25 Jul 2010 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?? p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/1312FDB919E7AEF0>



Potential untapped

July 25, 2010 | Independent Record (Helena, MT) Author: MIKE DENNISON IR State Bureau | Section: News | 1179 Words OpenURL Link

When it comes to wind power in Montana, there's plenty of talk of the coming boom — but as Montana talks, nearby states have sprinted ahead in actual development of wind projects.

Since Democrat Brian Schweitzer became governor in 2005, Montana has gone from virtually no functioning wind farms to a respectable 375 megawatts of wind power produced in the state as of May this year.

Yet during that same time period, Wyoming, North Dakota, Oregon, Washington and Minnesota have each added two, three or four times as much wind-power production inside their respective state lines.

And then there's Iowa, which added more than 3,000 megawatts, or eight times the Montana total. In 2008 and 2009 alone, 37 new wind-power projects came on line in Iowa, compared to just three in Montana.

So, what gives in the "Saudi Arabia of wind," a moniker sometimes attached to Montana?

Developers and boosters of wind power say the major stumbling block continues to be a lack of adequate transmission lines, needed to move wind power within the state and beyond its borders, to urban marketplaces that want renewable power.

Other factors include simple geography — Montana remains far from major markets, and its small population will never be a huge consumer of wind power — and the slowness of local utilities to add wind power to their electricity mix.

Even the biggest boosters of wind power acknowledge it may take a few more years before things really take off in Montana. Yet they remain optimistic that regional demand for renewable power and Montana's excellent wind "resource" eventually will create that long-awaited boom in the windy prairies of Montana.

"Montana is moving faster than our neighbors on transmission," says Gov. Schweitzer. "No place else has the quality of wind that we have. ... The interest in Montana projects has just exploded in recent years."

At least a dozen serious developers are examining potential wind projects in Montana. Only one major project, however, has been built since 2005: The 210-megawatt Glacier Wind Farm near Cut Bank, developed by the Spanish firm NaturEner, which sells the power to San Diego Gas & Electric.

This summer, construction is beginning on the 214-mile Montana-Alberta Tie power line (MATL), running north from Great Falls into Alberta. It creates a new path for wind-power developers to feed their power into the western grid.

MATL could enable a 300-megawatt expansion of NaturEner's wind farm north of Cut Bank, creating a transmission path for the power.

Ten days ago, San Diego Gas & Electric asked the California Public Utilities Commission to approve its proposed \$600 million financing of the project — with the aim of starting construction by the end of 2012. The commission probably won't act on the utility's request until next year.

At least five other major power-line projects that hope to transport wind power are in various stages of development in Montana.

One is from Grasslands Renewable Energy, a Bozeman firm proposing to string lines across Montana and into Canada, North Dakota and Wyoming. The \$2.5 billion to \$3 billion proposal also includes a hydroelectric project near Martinsdale that could balance and store wind power, helping offset problems caused by the intermittent nature of wind.

Carl Borgquist, president of the firm, says 10 wind-power developers have signed letters of intent to work with Grasslands, paying a small deposit. Yet bringing such projects forward takes years, he says — and a creditworthy customer to buy the power.

"That's the place that a lot of these transmission-and-distribution projects are right now: What are we going to build? Where are we going to build it? And who are the customers going to be?" he says.

Rhyno Stinchfield, chief executive officer of Montana Wind Resources in Billings, says development of wind farms and transmission lines in Montana is moving on "parallel tracks," making it hard to predict when they'll come together.

"Once transmission gets here, we have a lot to provide," says Stinchfield, whose company hopes to develop several medium- to large-sized wind farms. "But we're kind of the last to come on line. ... There is kind of a tipping point out there with people saying, 'Do we want renewable energy?' The question is how much is it going to cost and how quickly can we bring it on line."

Right now, wind power is usually more expensive than electricity from sources like coal, hydro and natural gas.

At the same time, most states in the West, including Montana, are requiring utilities to sell a minimum of renewable power, such as wind.

Montana Public Service Commissioner Brad Molnar, R-Laurel, a frequent critic of wind power, says he believes the market for wind power "is dropping like a rock," because the price of natural gas has plummeted and people don't want to pay for more expensive wind if they don't have to.

It's up to wind-power developers to show that their electricity is a good deal and as reliable as other power, without government subsidies or promotion, he says.

Wind-power enthusiasts, however, say public policy already is heading toward promoting more renewable and less fossil-fuel power, positioning Montana as an inevitable supplier of wind power — and that wind power should become relatively cheaper over time.

"With a wind farm, you know what it costs to operate for the next 30 years," says Matt Jennings, vice president of government relations for Grasslands. "The cost of other power is extremely volatile."

Mark Jacobson, director of business development for Invenergy, which has developed 20 wind-power projects in the West, including the 135-megawatt Judith Gap project in central Montana, says some of Montana's neighbors have had advantages that Montana can't really match.

For example, Minnesota, Iowa and North Dakota are in a power grid better able to incorporate wind power and are close to huge consumer markets like Chicago and Minneapolis-St. Paul, he says.

Also, Wyoming had ample transmission capacity in an area that PacifiCorp, a major utility company, chose to put up several wind farms in recent years, while Oregon and Washington have the Bonneville Power Administration, a federal power agency that has had ample amounts of hydropower to help balance intermittent wind power, industry officials say.

Yet they also say Montana has enacted positive policies to encourage development of wind projects and power lines, such as property-tax reductions and the state's renewable-power requirements.

"The governor and people in Montana are doing everything they can to make it happen," says Rob McFarlane, chief business officer for Tonbridge Power, the Canadian firm building the MATL line. "I think Montana will get there. I think wind will become a major resource in Montana."

"There is movement," adds Stinchfield. "There needs to be something out there that breaks this dam. ... We're moving forward every day. We don't feel like it's a standstill, by any means."

Copyright (c) 2010 Independent Record

• Citation (aglc Style)

MIKE DENNISON IR State Bureau, 'Potential untapped', *Independent Record* (online), 25 Jul 2010 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/1312FECDDC8C1718



Wind power: Is Montana lagging behind neighboring states in development?

July 25, 2010 | Montana Standard, The (Butte, MT)
Author: Mike Dennison of The Standard State Bureau | Section: Local | 1109 Words
OpenURL Link

HELENA - When it comes to wind power in Montana, there's plenty of talk of the coming boom - but as Montana talks.

nearby states have sprinted ahead in actual development of wind projects.

Since Democrat Brian Schweitzer became governor in 2005, Montana has gone from virtually no functioning wind farms to a respectable 375 megawatts of wind power produced in the state as of May this year.

Yet during that same time period, Wyoming, North Dakota, Oregon, Washington and Minnesota have each added two, three or four times as much wind-power production inside their respective state lines.

And then there's Iowa, which added more than 3,000 megawatts, or eight times the Montana total. In 2008 and 2009 alone,

37 new wind-power projects came on line in Iowa, compared to just three in Montana.

So, what gives in the "Saudi Arabia of wind," a moniker sometimes attached to Montana?

Developers and boosters of wind power say the major stumbling block continues to be a lack of adequate transmission lines, needed to move wind power within the state and beyond its borders, to urban marketplaces that want renewable power.

Other factors include simple geography - Montana remains far from major markets, and its small population will never be a huge consumer of wind power - and the slowness of local utilities to add wind power to their electricity mix.

Even the biggest boosters of wind power acknowledge it may take a few more years before things really take off in Montana. Yet they remain optimistic that regional demand for renewable power and Montana's excellent wind "resource" eventually will create that long-awaited boom in the windy prairies of Montana.

"Montana is moving faster than our neighbors on transmission," says Gov. Schweitzer. "No place else has the quality of wind that we have. ... The interest in Montana projects has just

exploded in recent years."

At least a dozen serious developers are examining potential wind projects in Montana. Only one major project, however, has been built

since 2005:

The 210-megawatt Glacier Wind Farm near Cut Bank, developed by the Spanish firm NaturEner, which sells the power

to San Diego Gas & Electric.

This summer, construction is beginning on the 214-mile Montana-Alberta Tie power line (MATL), running north from

Great Falls into Alberta. It creates a new path for wind-power developers to feed their power into the western grid.

MATL could enable a 300-megawatt expansion of NaturEner's wind farm north of Cut Bank, creating a transmission path for the power.

Ten days ago, San Diego Gas & Electric asked the California Public Utilities Commission to approve its proposed \$600 million financing of the project - with the aim of starting construction by the end of 2012. The commission probably won't act on the utility's request until next year.

At least five other major power-line projects that hope to transport wind power are in various stages of development in Montana.

One is from Grasslands Renewable Energy, a Bozeman firm proposing to string lines across Montana and into Canada, North Dakota and Wyoming. The \$2.5 billion to \$3 billion proposal also includes a hydroelectric project near Martinsdale that could balance and store wind power, helping offset problems caused by the intermittent nature of wind.

Carl Borgquist, president of the firm, says 10 wind-power developers have signed letters of intent to work with Grasslands, paying a small deposit. Yet bringing such projects forward takes years, he says - and a creditworthy customer to buy the power.

"That's the place that a lot of these transmission-and-distribution projects are right now: What are we going to build? Where are we going to build it? And who are the customers going to be?" he says.

Rhyno Stinchfield, chief executive officer of Montana Wind Resources in Billings, says development of wind farms and transmission lines in Montana is moving on "parallel tracks," making it hard to predict when they'll come together.

"Once transmission gets here, we have a lot to provide," says Stinchfield, whose company hopes to develop several medium- to large-sized wind farms. "But we're kind of the last to come on line. ... There is kind of a tipping point out there with people saying, 'Do we want renewable energy?' The question is how much is it going to cost and how quickly can we bring it on line."

Right now, wind power is usually more expensive than electricity from sources like coal, hydro and natural gas.

At the same time, most states in the West, including Montana, are requiring utilities to sell a minimum of renewable power, such as wind.

Montana Public Service Commissioner Brad Molnar, R-Laurel, a frequent critic of wind power, says he believes the market for wind power "is dropping like a rock," because the price of natural gas has plummeted and people don't want to pay for more expensive wind if they don't have to.

It's up to wind-power developers to show that their electricity is a good deal and as reliable as other power, without government subsidies or promotion, he says.

Wind-power enthusiasts, however, say public policy already is heading toward promoting more renewable and less fossil-fuel power, positioning Montana as an inevitable supplier of wind power - and that wind power should become relatively cheaper over time.

"With a wind farm, you know what it costs to operate for the next 30 years," says Matt Jennings, vice president of government relations for Grasslands. "The cost of other power is extremely volatile."

Mark Jacobson, director of business development for Invenergy, which has developed 20 wind-power projects in the West, including the 135-megawatt Judith Gap project in central Montana, says some of Montana's neighbors have

had advantages that Montana really can't match.

For example, Minnesota, Iowa and North Dakota are in a power grid better able to incorporate wind power and are close to huge consumer markets like Chicago and Minneapolis-St. Paul, he says.

Also, Wyoming had ample transmission capacity in an area that PacifiCorp, a major utility company, chose to put up several wind farms in recent years, while Oregon and Washington have the Bonneville Power Administration, a federal power agency that has had ample amounts of hydropower to help balance intermittent wind power, industry officials say.

Yet they also say Montana has enacted positive policies to encourage development of wind projects and power lines, such as property-tax reductions and the state's renewable-power requirements.

"The governor and people in Montana are doing everything they can to make it happen," says Rob McFarlane, chief business officer for Tonbridge Power, the Canadian firm building the MATL line. "I think Montana will get there. I think wind will become a major resource in Montana."

"There is movement," adds Stinchfield. "There needs to be something out there that breaks this dam. ... We're moving forward every day. We don't feel like it's a standstill, by any means."

-30

Copyright, 2010, The Montana Standard, All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Mike Dennison of The Standard State Bureau, 'Wind power: Is Montana lagging behind neighboring states in development?', Montana Standard, The (online), 25 Jul 2010 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/16A370DD7A2A3E58>



Montana lagging when it comes to wind power

July 24, 2010 | Missoulian (Missoula, MT) Author: MIKE DENNISON Missoulian State Bureau | Section: Montana & Regional | 1164 Words OpenURL Link

HELENA - When it comes to wind power in Montana, there's plenty of talk of the coming boom - but as Montana talks, nearby states have sprinted ahead in actual development of wind projects.

Since Democrat Brian Schweitzer became governor in 2005, Montana has gone from virtually no functioning wind farms to a respectable 375 megawatts of wind power produced in the state as of May this year.

Yet during that same time period, Wyoming, North Dakota, Oregon, Washington and Minnesota have each added two, three or four times as much wind-power production inside their respective state lines.

And then there's Iowa, which added more than 3,000 megawatts, or eight times the Montana total. In 2008 and 2009 alone, 37 new wind-power projects came on line in Iowa, compared to just three in Montana.

So, what gives in the "Saudi Arabia of wind," a moniker sometimes attached to Montana?

Developers and boosters of wind power say the major stumbling block continues to be a lack of adequate transmission lines, needed to move wind power within the state and beyond its borders, to urban marketplaces that want renewable power.

Other factors include simple geography - Montana remains far from major markets, and its small population will never be a huge consumer of wind power - and the slowness of local utilities to add wind power to their electricity mix.

Even the biggest boosters of wind power acknowledge it may take a few more years before things really take off in Montana. Yet they remain optimistic that regional demand for renewable power and Montana's excellent wind "resource" eventually will create that long-awaited boom in the windy prairies of Montana.

"Montana is moving faster than our neighbors on transmission," says Gov. Schweitzer. "No place else has the quality of wind that we have. ... The interest in Montana projects has just exploded in recent years."

At least a dozen serious developers are examining potential wind projects in Montana. Only one major project, however, has been built since 2005: The 210-megawatt Glacier Wind Farm near Cut Bank, developed by the Spanish firm NaturEner, which sells the power to San Diego Gas & Electric.

This summer, construction is beginning on the 214-mile Montana-Alberta Tie power line, or MATL, running north from Great Falls into Alberta. It creates a new path for wind-power developers to feed their power into the western grid.

MATL could enable a 300-megawatt expansion of NaturEner's wind farm north of Cut Bank, creating a transmission path for the power.

Ten days ago, San Diego Gas & Electric asked the California Public Utilities Commission to approve its proposed \$600 million financing of the project - with the aim of starting construction by the end of 2012. The commission probably won't act on the utility's request until next year.

At least five other major power-line projects that hope to transport wind power are in various stages of development in Montana.

One is from Grasslands Renewable Energy, a Bozeman firm proposing to string lines across Montana and into Canada, North Dakota and Wyoming. The \$2.5 billion to \$3 billion proposal also includes a hydroelectric project near Martinsdale that could balance and store wind power, helping offset problems caused by the intermittent nature of wind.

Carl Borgquist, president of the firm, says 10 wind-power developers have signed letters of intent to work with Grasslands, paying a small deposit. Yet bringing such projects forward takes years, he says - and a credit-worthy customer to buy the power.

"That's the place that a lot of these transmission-and-distribution projects are right now: What are we going to build? Where are we going to build it? And who are the customers going to be?" he says.

Rhyno Stinchfield, chief executive officer of Montana Wind Resources in Billings, says development of wind farms and transmission lines in Montana is moving on "parallel tracks," making it hard to predict when they'll come together.

"Once transmission gets here, we have a lot to provide," says Stinchfield, whose company hopes to develop several medium-size to large wind farms. "But we're kind of the last to come on line. ... There is kind of a tipping point out there with people saying, 'Do we want renewable energy?' The question is how much is it going to cost and how quickly can we bring it on line."

Right now, wind power is usually more expensive than electricity from sources such as coal, hydro and natural gas.

At the same time, most states in the West, including Montana, are requiring utilities to sell a minimum of renewable power, such as wind.

Montana Public Service Commissioner Brad Molnar, R-Laurel, a frequent critic of wind power, says he believes the market for wind power "is dropping like a rock," because the price of natural gas has plummeted and people don't want to pay for more expensive wind if they don't have to.

It's up to wind power developers to show that their electricity is a good deal and as reliable as other power, without government subsidies or promotion, he says.

Wind power enthusiasts, however, say public policy already is heading toward promoting more renewable and less fossil fuel power, positioning Montana as an inevitable supplier of wind power - and that wind power should become relatively cheaper over time.

"With a wind farm, you know what it costs to operate for the next 30 years," says Matt Jennings, vice president of government relations for Grasslands. "The cost of other power is extremely volatile."

Mark Jacobson, director of business development for Invenergy, which has developed 20 wind-power projects in the West, including the 135-megawatt Judith Gap project in central Montana, says some of Montana's neighbors have had advantages that Montana can't really match.

For example, Minnesota, Iowa and North Dakota are in a power grid better able to incorporate wind power and are close to huge consumer markets like Chicago and Minneapolis-St. Paul, he says.

Also, Wyoming had ample transmission capacity in an area where PacifiCorp, a major utility company, chose to put up several wind farms in recent years, while Oregon and Washington have the Bonneville Power Administration, a

federal power agency that has had ample amounts of hydropower to help balance intermittent wind power, industry officials say.

Yet they also say Montana has enacted positive policies to encourage development of wind projects and power lines, such as property tax reductions and the state's renewable-power requirements.

"The governor and people in Montana are doing everything they can to make it happen," says Rob McFarlane, chief business officer for Tonbridge Power, the Canadian firm building the MATL line. "I think Montana will get there. I think wind will become a major resource in Montana."

"There is movement," adds Stinchfield. "There needs to be something out there that breaks this dam. ... We're moving forward every day. We don't feel like it's a standstill, by any means."

Missoulian State Bureau reporter Mike Dennison can be reached at 1-800-525-4920 or at mike.dennison@lee.net. Copyright (c) 2010 Missoulian

• Citation (aglc Style)

MIKE DENNISON Missoulian State Bureau, 'Montana lagging when it comes to wind power', *Missoulian* (online), 24 Jul 2010 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/131302CEC4315188