

NaturEner shows off \$500 million Glacier Wind farm

July 23, 2008 | Cut Bank Pioneer Press (MT) Author: LeAnne Kavanagh | Section: News | 874 Words OpenURL Link

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Thursday, July 17, marked the official ground breaking ceremony for NaturEner's \$500 million Glacier Wind Farm, which is located south of U.S. Highway 2 between Shelby and Cut Bank. Approximately 15 completed wind turbines provided a scenic backdrop of the event, which attracted approximately 200 people, from area landowners to local and state politicians to NaturEner dignitaries from Spain and San Francisco.

Black said the Glacier Wind Farm will increase the tax base of Toole and Glacier Counties and will bring needed tax dollars to the counties' schools, parks and recreation, hospitals and county departments. "This is what we've been hoping and praying for..."

Phase I of the wind farm is currently underway and will feature 71 wind turbines, which will generate over 106.5 megawatts of power.

Rafael Sanchez-Castillo Lodares, President, NaturEner S.A., traveled to Montana from NaturEner's home office in Madrid, Spain and offered, "We picked this location because we believed in the wind and the people..."

Gov. Brian Schweitzer said the sight of NaturEner's Glacier Wind Farm project "nearly brings tears to my eyes." Phase II of the project will add another 69 wind turbines and another 103.5 megawatts of power.

Bill Alexander, Chief Development Officer for NaturEner, expressed the company's appreciation to those involved in making the project a reality. He pointed out only about one-third of the projects proposed are actually completed. The standard time frame for wind energy projects is five years from conception to completion. "We did this one in three years," boasted Alexander, which he attributed to the overwhelming community, political and social support for the project. "Our greatest supporter," he pointed out, "was Gov. Brian Schweitzer."

In speaking to those gathered under a huge white tent in the middle of the prairie between Shelby and Cut Bank, Gov. Schweitzer said he "pushed" the Montana Legislature in 2005 to "create an environment" to bring wind energy to Montana. Two years later, Gov. Schweitzer reminded those present he "asked for tax laws to incentivize and to attract wind companies" with the green, clean energy bill. "Without it, we wouldn't be in this tent today," added the governor.

"We honor our good friends from Spain for coming, choosing and believing in Montana," he added.

Saying he was delighted with how NaturEner has been received in Montana, Lodares said NaturEner is "planning to build other" wind farms in Montana and "would like to be considered part of the community."

In introducing Jose Maria Sanchez Seara, the CEO of NaturEner USA, LLC, Alexander described Seara as instrumental in forging the positive and progressive direction of NaturEner in North America.

Seara told those present a short 18 months ago, NaturEner's presence in the United States amounted to three people working out of a hotel room. Today that number has grown to 30. The Glacier Wind Farm will boost property tax revenues in Toole and Glacier County by some \$4 million annually and royalties paid to area landowners are estimated at \$1 million annually. When completed, 70 percent of the Glacier Wind Farm will be located in Toole County and the remaining 30 percent will be in Glacier County.

Seara and NaturEner are confident future project expansion totaling \$1.5 billion will provide stable employment opportunities in this area. Over the lifetime of these projects, Toole and Glacier County will receive approximately \$300 million in added property tax revenues and landowner royalty payments will amount to \$100 million.

Alexander pointed out that wind energy technology "changes every day. Fifteen years ago it was half as efficient as it is today," he stated. He stressed the key to making wind energy viable is transmission, which will enable more projects to be built in the state.

Black said with the governor's help, he believes transmission lines such as the Montana Alberta Tie Ltd. Transmission line will be built. He also expressed his appreciation to former Kevin resident Dave Dumon, formerly of Great Plains Wind & Energy and now of NaturEner USA. "Dave recognized this area and brought Great Plains and then NaturEner to look at us. Now, if we can get the MATL line, you ain't seen nothing yet. This will be the biggest project in the history of north central Montana."

Alexander acknowledged several other out-of-town dignitaries who attended the event, including representatives from San Diego Gas & Electric, a California utility which has contracted to purchase power generated by the 210 megawatt wind farm; and officials from Acciona Windpower, the wind turbine generator manufacturer.

Alexander told those present they were lucky to have Shelby Mayor Larry Bonderud, who was unable to attend the event since he was out of the country traveling with his family. "I bet he's sick he can't be here to take all the credit," joked Alexander.

Mother Nature was on her best behavior for the classy event planned by NaturEner's Maria Luisa Beveridge, who works in the company's San Francisco office. Beveridge flew to Montana on Tuesday to make final arrangements for the catered affair, which featured a wide variety of gourmet appetizers, decadent sweets, fresh fruits, beverages and signature giveaway items from NaturEner and Mortenson Construction.

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NaturEner's ground breaking for Glacier Wind Farm attracts dignitaries from Shelby to Spain

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NaturEner project is 'win-wind' for county

June 25, 2008 | Shelby Promoter (MT) Author: LeAnne Kavanagh| Section: News | 1048 Words OpenURL Link

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NaturEner's Dave Dumon, formerly of Kevin, is no stranger to the Hi-Line or the project. He and Bill Alexander first pitched their idea to build a wind farm in this area in 2005 as owners of Great Plains Wind & Energy. They sold their business to NaturEner in 2007, but continue to manage the Glacier Wind Project, which is located just south of Ethridge.

The construction site is a bustling hub of activity, where safety comes first. According to Klaus Obel, NaturEner's Director of Project Management, between 40 and 60 loads of gravel and sand are trucked in daily from Knife River Corporation's location in Kalispell to the temporary concrete batch plant at the Glacier Wind construction site.

Obel said Knife River is one of several sub-contractors who have set up camp at the site, including: road contractors, an electrical trenching company, rebar installers and a quality control testing company.

Obel estimated there are 180 to 200 workers currently onsite and that number will grow to 220 to 230 at the peak of construction. The crews work 10-12 hour days, six days a week. Each day starts with a mandatory meeting, followed by 30 minutes of stretching and bending. "We preach safety, safety, safety every day," said Dumon.

Heavy rains in late May and early June have slowed the project down somewhat, but Dumon said the company is still looking to complete construction and have Phase 1 operational and producing power by Oct. 31. Weather permitting, work will continue and hopefully be completed on Phase II of the project by Dec. 31.

"The weather gods sent us a little too much rain," said Obel during a recent tour of the project. Contractors and subcontractors planned to take three days off for the Memorial Day holiday since an agreement with the Montana Department of Transportation prevented truck delivery during the long holiday weekend. Construction is also expected to cease for the Fourth of July holiday weekend.

Of the 140 turbines, 70 percent will be located in Toole County and 30 percent in Glacier County, said Obel. Each turbine ascends approximately 250 feet, or 26 stories, into the sky and consists of five main pieces. The foundation for each turbine includes 400 cubic yards of cement or approximately 45 truckloads. Knife River has 15 cement trucks they use to haul cement to each turbine site. Fifty core tests are performed on each foundation pad.

The foundation is reinforced with 35 tons-yes tons-of rebar, which is trucked to the site from Colorado. Once the foundation, which spans 50 feet across and nine feet deep, has been completed and the control panels installed, workers will "set" the tower pieces.

There are 146 bolts, each measuring six to seven feet in length, that attach the base section of the tower to the foundation. Workers use a laser level and bolt placement templates before and during this portion of the project.

The blades are attached to the hub, on the ground, making up the rotor piece. A crane is used to lift the sections into place and attach them to the nacelle. The top of the tower, which narrows to seven feet, is then attached to the nacelle.

The blades, which many people think are hollow, actually weigh 13,000 pounds each and are made of a composite fiberglass material, which allows it to flex in the wind. A reinforced beam runs through each blade, which has a bigger wingspan than a 747-jet or approximately 120 feet.

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Obel estimated it took 25 to 40 semi trucks to deliver the pieces of the 315-ft. crane used to erect the turbines. Once all the pieces arrived, workers needed three days to assemble it. Sixteen counter weights, weighing 18,000 pounds each, sit on either side of the crane, which travels 1.5 mph and has a "drag" width of 42 feet. Ironically, due to the wide drag, the pounds of pressure per square inch of the towering crane are less than that of Chevy pickup, said Obel.

According to Obel, putting up the turbines once the foundation has been prepared doesn't take long and, with good weather conditions, the crew can erect two turbines per day. The first turbine was scheduled to be put up last week.

Once the project is finished, NaturEner officials will employ 12 to 14 full-time employees and two or three administrative staff to maintain and manage the 140 turbines. Routine maintenance must be performed twice a year, said Obel.

Dumon urged those hoping to catch a glimpse of the project from nearby county roads to use extreme caution and to follow all posted speed limits and warning signs. He also pointed out the more than 30 miles of "stringer" roads for the project are all on private property and should not be accessed by unauthorized personnel.

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NaturEner's \$400 million wind farm project is boom to Hi-Line economy

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Power from wind farm sold to California utility

June 18, 2008 | Cut Bank Pioneer Press (MT) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 376 Words OpenURL Link

San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) announced last week it has signed two power-purchase agreements with NaturEner for the output from NaturEner's soon-to-be constructed Glacier Wind Energy facilities in Montana.

Under a long-term renewable energy agreement, the wind farms will add 210 megawatts (MW) or 635,000 megawatt-hours annually to SDG&E's total renewable energy portfolio and help to secure the utility's plans for a "greener" electric future for its customers.

"The NaturEner Glacier Wind Energy agreements bring us closer to our goal of acquiring 20 percent of our energy portfolio from clean, green sources of energy," said Debra L. Reed, President and Chief Executive Officer of SDG&E. "Adding renewable energy is a critical part of our long-term energy plan for the region and for our customers."

Every year since 2002, SDG&E has issued market solicitations in pursuit of renewable energy for the region's power supply.

In response to the utility's 10th renewable Request for Offers (RFO), SDG&E also reported that it has received more than 60 offers for renewable-energy-supply from the most recent solicitation that closed April 30.

The 6,000 MW proposed represent a mixture of renewable energy technologies, with solar bidders forming the largest segment. Projects originate from a wide geographical area, including within SDG&E's own service territory, elsewhere in California, and from other states, such as Arizona, Nevada and Baja California.

By far, the greatest number of proposed renewable projects originate in inland areas east of San Diego-where renewable energy delivery will be enhanced by the addition of the Sunrise Powerlink.

Today, six percent of SDG&E's energy-resource mix comes from renewable resources such as wind, solar, biomass and geothermal. In addition to the utility's existing renewable portfolio, SDG&E has contracted for significant renewable energy supplies that will come online in the next few years and help meet the state's clean energy goals.

The NaturEner wind contract alone will increase SDG&E's renewable energy supply by nearly four percent in 2010 and beyond.

SDG&E will work with bidders over the following months to execute contracts.

NaturEner is a wholly owned subsidiary of Grupo NaturEner S.A., a renewable energy company based in Madrid, Spain. The company entered the U. S. market in 2006 and has approximately 1,500 MW of wind energy projects in operation or development in Alberta, Canada and the United States.

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Answer to area's economic development is Blowing in the wind

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NaturEner announces final plans for nearby wind farm

May 28, 2008 | Cut Bank Pioneer Press (MT) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 246 Words OpenURL Link

NaturEner USA, LLC (Naturener) announced last week final plans for the construction of a 210 megawatt wind energy project in north central Montana. As planned, the Glacier Wind Energy project will be a multi-phase project located between Shelby and Cut Bank.

"We are very happy to announce that the first 107 MW phase of the project is currently under construction and should be on line this October," said Jose Maria Sanchez Seara, NaturEner's CEO. "Turbine equipment from Acciona has begun to arrive at the project site and we are on schedule to begin commissioning the first 71 wind turbine generators this September."

The timing for completion of future project phases will be somewhat dependent upon the timing of the extension of the U.S. Section 45 Production Tax Credits (PTC). Since the PTC was instituted in 1992, it has been allowed to lapse three times - in 1999, 2001 and 2003. While the incentive has been renewed after each expiration, any pause in the PTC renewal has caused slowdowns and disruption in the development and supply chain in the wind energy industry. It is becoming more and more likely this will be the case again in 2008.

Even in the event the industry experiences another such expiration, NaturEner is optimistic the tax incentive will be renewed quickly. Upon receiving the news of such a renewal, NaturEner and our turbine supplier Acciona Windpower Northamerica, LLC (Acciona) are prepared to continue immediately with the completion of the Glacier Wind Energy project.

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Final plans announced for NaturEner's Glacier Wind Energy Project

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Work begins on wind farm

April 20, 2008 | Billings Gazette, The (MT)

Section: News 240 Words

OpenURL Link

GREAT FALLS - Work on what will be the state's largest wind farm is under way in Glacier and Toole counties.

Crews are grading roads, pouring concrete and digging holes where the towers will go.

"It's a beehive of activity," said state Sen. Jerry Black of Shelby, who has been a big proponent of wind development in north-central Montana.

The 210-megawatt Glacier Wind Project is owned by NaturEner USA, whose global headquarters are in Spain.

About 60 workers are on the site, including subcontractors, said Bill Alexander, the company's chief development officer. Over the next couple of months, the work force will expand to 200.

"We're on a pretty compressed timeline, and the level of activity is very high," Alexander said.

The \$400 million facility, which will employ 15 to 20 people, is scheduled for completion in November. It's the first of several wind projects that local officials hope will materialize along a proposed 203-mile-long transmission line between Great Falls and Lethbridge, Alberta.

Once completed, the wind farm will have 140 265-foot-tall towers. The 24,000-acre wind farm spans the border of Glacier and Toole counties south of Ethridge.

The general contractor for the project is M.C. Mortenson Co. of Minneapolis.

"We asked the general contractor to use as much local contracts and local contractors as possible," Alexander said.
"They did a good job of seeking out Montana companies to use."

The Judith Gap wind farm, currently the state's largest, produces 135 megawatts of power.

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