

# Wind project still going strong

## Power site will sprout up over Bone Road by the end of the year

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By the end of the year, Bonneville County will be home to Idaho's first large-scale wind power site.

An uneven line of 43 white turbines on towers more than 200 feet tall will be placed among 12 miles of wheat fields above the Bone Road.

PacifiCorp signed a 20-year deal April 29 to buy 175,000 megawatt-hours of electricity each year from the project, which will be built and operated by Ridgeline-Airtricity and Invenergy.

That's enough power for more than 17,500 homes.

The approximately \$80 million project has already received approval from planning and zoning officials, and conditional agreements with landowners have been signed. Getting the agreement with PacifiCorp was the last step.

"I'm very excited," said Rich Rayhill, Ridgeline's vice president.

The turbines have to be installed and generating electricity by the end of December to qualify for a federal tax credit, which is essential for the project to make a profit, he said.

The Wolverine Creek wind project is the first alternative energy project from which PacifiCorp has agreed to buy power.

The company, which serves 61,000 customers in eastern and southern Idaho and more than 1.5 million across the West, relies almost entirely on coal and hydropower. It plans to soon have contracts for as much as 1,100 megawatts of renewable power -- including wind and the Earth's heat -- and is negotiating with about 10 other bidders, a company spokesman said.

"We're interested in creating more diversity in our resource mix," said David Eskelsen, spokesman for PacifiCorp. "Wind power has been very exciting for us. While the upfront costs are a little steep, the fuel cost is zero, and fuel is the biggest cost component of generation."

Local officials are also pleased the project is going ahead.

"I think it will benefit all of us," said Roger Christensen, Bonneville County commissioner. "There will be property tax on them, but aside from that, I think it's good for us to use more of these clean alternative sources of energy."

Although some of the 1.5 megawatt turbines will be visible from downtown Idaho Falls, the developers planned to avoid putting them in places where they will be more visible, Rayhill said.

Chicago-based Invenergy will fund and build the project, which has been researched and designed by Ridgeline.

The project was almost held up by a lack of turbines. Invenergy was lucky that it has placed orders for turbines before the federal tax credit was extended in the fall, said senior vice president Kevin Smith, because soon after the tax credit was signed, there was a sudden rush of orders and manufacturers were quickly overwhelmed. Ridgeline had no chance of buying any in time, Rayhill said.

Invenergy is working to find a contractor to do the construction, and the company is taking bids from local businesses, Smith said. Wolverine Ridge will be the company's fourth wind power project.