

Post-Bulletin

Fillmore County wind farm turbines could be turning in 2010

Wed, May 13, 2009 PB Online

By [Laura Gossman](#)

Post-Bulletin, Rochester MN

PRESTON -- A wind project in Fillmore County continues to move forward, and the turbines could be turning by the end of 2010.

EcoEnergy representative Don Miller updated the Fillmore County board on a proposed 200-megawatt wind farm west of Harmony that could include as many as 134 wind turbines.

"We've erected four meteorological towers in the area to measure wind speed and direction and we're very comfortable with the wind resources in this area," Miller said.

He said the energy company has already signed agreements with 110 property owners in Bristol, Harmony, York and Carimona townships.

Two other wind farms are currently developing in that area, but EcoEnergy's farm will likely be the first to erect turbines. The company is hoping to break ground during the spring of 2010, erect turbines over the winter and then connect to the grid by the end of the year.

A transmission line will mostly run on a private easement along Minnesota Highway 44.

"We're currently considering a 1.5-megawatt General Electric turbine," Miller said. "Until we know for sure which turbine we'll be using we won't know the exact number or turbines we need or where they will be located."

The project could cost as much as \$400 million, so the company is continuing to look for investors.

"We're competing with projects worldwide," Miller said. "The economy has slowed our efforts, but we're confident that we'll get that financing."

He said the next step is to go through state permitting for the certificate of need.

He's confident there's a need, because the state has set a goal of using 25 percent renewable energy by 2025.

A public hearing for the site permit was held April 15 and the comment period on that permit will end May 20.

The energy company will also need to prepare an environmental report by the end of July, which will include studies on birds, bats, noise and wetlands, Miller said.

Commissioner Marc Prestby was concerned about setbacks and noise levels.

Miller said the state requires that no house experience more than 50 decibels of sound from the turbines. He compared 50 decibels to the hum of a refrigerator.

He also said the state requires a 500-foot setback from any homes, but that company policy is a setback of 1,000 feet.

Commissioner Chuck Amunrud was concerned about the condition of roads in the project area.

"We need to make sure things will be repaired accordingly and that the roads will be maintained," Amunrud said.

Miller said the company plans to start working with the county highway engineer, because maintenance crews will need driveway access to get to the turbines once built.

The company is planning to build an office and maintenance building in Harmony for the 10 to 15 people it plans to employ.

Post-Bulletin Company, L.L.C.
www.postbulletin.com