

## Harnessing the power of the wind: Major progress made on wind farm

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By Joe Tamborello

Construction continues with more than 50 wind turbines erected so far at the EcoGrove Wind LLC wind farm outside Lena. Several turbines can be seen from West Pin Hook Road near Galena Road (shown).

### [Photos](#)



By Travis Morse

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Lena, Ill. -

Project organizers say that approximately 50 turbines have been constructed at the planned 67-turbine wind farm located northwest of Lena, and that the goal is to complete the farm by the end of March.

EcoGrove Wind LLC wind farm, Phase 1, is located just north of Galena Road and Baker Road outside Lena. For the past several months, wind turbine components have been delivered to the site and crews have been assembling full turbines at the farm.

Last fall, organizers had hoped to complete the wind farm by the end of 2008. Initial progress on the farm's construction began in May 2008, with the completion of a gravel parking lot. Nick Rigas, vice president of Freeport-based EcoEnergy LLC, said the project fell behind schedule due to problematic weather conditions in recent months. High winds have made it difficult to safely lift the rotors into place for the turbines, he said. The project is owned by Acciona, and EcoEnergy is helping develop the farm. Acciona North America is headquartered in Chicago.

Rigas said wind speeds tend to be higher at 80 meters (roughly 262 feet) above ground, where workers are stationed to guide the rotors into place on the turbines. For safety reasons, workers can't be that high when wind speeds are above a certain level, Rigas said.

"With windy days, you can't make the lifts of the rotors, and you can't have people up at those heights facilitating the lifts, for safety reasons," Rigas said.

In addition to high winds, cold and snowy winter weather has also delayed the project, Rigas said.

"Snow and ice contributes to the delay, too," Rigas said. "You have to make sure the blades are free of any snow and ice. And with bitterly cold temperatures, you can't have people out there."

Despite the delay, project organizers are hopeful that the farm will be completed by the end of March. Once

all the turbines are constructed, organizers want to get the farm up and running as soon as possible.

### **Project Details**

The \$200 million EcoGrove wind farm involves building 67 turbines in its first phase, spread out over around 7,300 acres in Stephenson County. The project is expected to create up to 10 full-time jobs.

These jobs will involve operating and maintaining the wind farm once it's operational, Rigas said. Local wind farm officials were uncertain whether these 10 jobs had been filled yet, as Acciona is handling that process.

Each completed turbine is composed of seven major parts, and these parts are brought to the site by truck. The parts include three tower sections that make up the turbine's support tower, the nacelle that houses the turbine's generator, and three blade or rotor parts. A majority of the parts were made in West Branch, Iowa, but the blades originated from North Dakota.

Acciona and EcoEnergy are also planning Phase 2 and 3 of the EcoGrove project. These phases could add another 70 to 100 turbines in Stephenson County. However, these phases are still in the preliminary planning stage.