

Six down, 61 to go



By Stefanie Weiss / The Journal-Standard

Work continues on the 67-turbine EcoGrove Wind LLC wind farm northwest of Lena. As of Nov. 5, 2008, six full turbines have been completed for the project.

By Travis Morse
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Lena, Ill. -

EcoEnergy officials say that six full turbines have been completed so far for the 67-turbine wind farm planned for northwest of Lena, and that the project is moving forward as expected.

“From what I hear, everything is going well out there,” said Nick Rigas, vice president of Freeport-based EcoEnergy LLC, the developer on the project, which is now owned by Acciona. “Everything is moving along accordingly.”

For the past several months in the summer and fall of 2008, wind turbine components have been delivered to the tower sites for the EcoGrove Wind LLC wind farm, which is located just north of the Galena Road and Baker Road intersection outside Lena. A large crane was also brought to the site to help move the turbine parts into place.

Each completed turbine is composed of seven major parts, and these parts are brought to the sites by truck, Rigas said. 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 parts, he said.

Most of the equipment for the 67 proposed turbines have been trucked in, but there is still more to come, Rigas said. A majority of the parts were manufactured in West Branch, Iowa, but the blades originated from North Dakota, Rigas said.

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

Property Owner Speaks

Joe Blair of rural Winslow said he and his wife own farm property that will be used for one of the EcoGrove towers, and his extended family has property that will be used for eight more towers.

He said large construction projects can be messy, but that area farmers and EcoGrove workers have been accommodating to each other throughout this process. Blair said his trucks have had to use the same access roads as the wind farm vehicles, and that he has been able to harvest his corn around the tower construction site on his property.

“From my perspective, it has gone very well,” Blair said. “We’ve accommodated each other. They have made a conscientious effort to help maintain the roads.”

Initial progress on the farm’s construction began in May 2008 with the completion of a gravel parking lot at the intersection of Galena Road and Baker Road. In September, organizers said that they hoped to finish primary construction on Phase 1 of the project by the end of 2008. It is unclear at this point whether that is still a feasible deadline.

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.

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