

OUR OPINION: A vision for the future

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Freeport, Ill. -

The formal celebration of the start of operations for the EcoGrove Wind Farm near Lena last week represents both an accomplishment and a paradigm shift in our approach to solving this nation's need for more electricity.

Developed and constructed during the past three years, the 67 turbines are expected to generate 100 megawatts of electricity, which is estimated at enough power to serve the needs of 25,000 households. The project employed 125 people during its construction and created 11 new jobs to operate and maintain the farm. It is a new industry that offers employment opportunity during a tough economic period and represents evidence that our region is committed to the newest technology for developing independent, alternative energy sources.

EcoGrove will also attract the interest of other companies seeking successful examples of alternative energy development, and people who simply want to see this massive farm with its spread of 400-foot towering wind turbines that dot the landscape. It is both an example of what can be accomplished and an attraction for visitors to our region.

Conventional development of energy sources will not provide enough electricity for our future, or offer us the independence this nation needs to separate its foreign policy from its energy policy.

That is one reason why the EcoGrove Wind Farm is a significant accomplishment and a potential magnet for other new technologies offering energy independence for our nation.

Similar new technologies are already at work at the Atkins ethanol plant near Lena and on the drawing board for the Project Cat development being planned for Mill Race Industrial Crossing.

The picture that emerges when these alternative energy operations are considered collectively is a region that is among the leaders in developing solutions for tomorrow's energy needs.

It's an exciting future.

We congratulate EcoGrove and welcome the operation and its future in Northwest Illinois.