

Tri-State announces expansion at Logan County wind facility

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Colorado's newest renewable energy facility is already growing. The current 67-megawatt Colorado Highlands Wind project—from which Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association receives 100 percent of the power—is expanding to 91 megawatts. Construction, using 14 GE turbines, is expected to commence in July and be completed this fall.

Tri-State has a 20-year power purchase agreement to receive all the electricity and environmental attributes from the facility, which is jointly owned by Alliance Power, Inc. of Littleton and GE Energy Financial Services of Stamford, Conn.

The wind farm was constructed in 2012 and became operational in December. It is located on 6,640 acres in northeast Colorado's Logan County—in the service territory of Tri-State member co-op Highline Electric Association.

“Colorado Highlands Wind has been performing extremely well since being brought on-line late last year,” said Tri-State senior vice president Brad Nebergall.

“The original engineering and design accommodated up to 91 megawatts—which is the maximum that the existing transmission interconnection can support. So now that the additional 14 turbines are available, we are pleased to move forward with its full build-out after Tri-State's board of directors approved the expansion at its February 2013 meeting,” he said.

“Colorado Highlands Wind is pleased to enable Tri-State to complete the original vision of the project, capturing its full efficiency and benefits,” said Jim Michael, managing member for Colorado Highlands Wind.

The expansion coincides with an RFP (request for proposals) process for additional renewable energy supply that Tri-State is currently undertaking. Tri-State issued the RFP in mid-February and is presently analyzing the proposals that were submitted by the April 2 deadline—and intends to review a short list of the top prospects with its board of directors within the next couple of months.

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“The current competitive pricing in the renewable energy sector—particularly wind—encouraged us to explore market opportunities to add an additional project or projects to Tri-State’s renewable resource portfolio through the RFP process,” Nebergall said. “At the same time, we realize the value we’ll be receiving through the Colorado Highlands Wind expansion.”

Colorado Highlands Wind is currently one of three utility-scale renewable energy facilities from which Tri-State receives all of the electrical output and renewable energy credits. In 2010 the wholesale power supplier began purchasing the electricity generated at the 51-megawatt Kit Carson Windpower Project in eastern Colorado as well as the 30-megawatt Cimarron Solar Facility in northeastern New Mexico.

In addition, Tri-State’s member co-ops have another 45 megawatts of local, community-based renewable and distributed generation projects in operation or scheduled to be operational later this year.

Based in the Denver suburb of Westminster, Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association is a not-for-profit wholesale power supplier to 44 electric cooperatives and public power districts serving approximately 1.5 million consumers throughout a 200,000 square-mile service territory across Colorado, Nebraska, New Mexico and Wyoming.

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