

Wind farm assessed at public scoping meeting

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

The U.S. Department of Energy hosted a Public Scoping Meeting for Environmental Assessment for the proposed NECO Wind 30 MW Community Wind Power project projected for Phillips and Logan counties. The meeting was held Thursday, May 27 at the Haxtun Community Center and had an attendance between 50 and 60 from the public.

In January the Department of Energy announced the award of a \$2.5 million grant to Phillips County for the NECO Wind Project. NECO Wind has proposed a 30 Megawatt wind generation farm southwest of Haxtun in Logan and Phillips counties which would interconnect at the Haxtun Substation and bring power to the Western Area Power 115 MW transmission line which parallels U.S. Highway 6 and is already in existence.

Because federal dollars are being invested in the project, the National Environmental Policy Act requires an Environmental Assessment be conducted of the area to be impacted if the project moves forward.

Speakers at the meeting were Jason Randall, DOE project manager for Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy (Golden Office); Melissa Rossiter, NEPA document manager for the Golden Office of the Department of Energy; Jim Hartman, environmental manager with Western Area Power Authority; and Scott Hafner of National Wind, who is managing and developing the project for NECO Wind. Kurt Rautenstrauch, contractor with DOE, is also part of the Department of Energy team and was in attendance.

The Department of Energy hosted the meeting to allow the public to provide comments on the proposed project. The Environmental Assessment will address concerns brought forward by the public.

They are looking for any adverse environmental effects that cannot be avoided should this project be implemented. The Assessment will also evaluate viable alternatives, look at the maintenance issues of long-term productivity and characterize any irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources that would be involved if the project is implemented.

Hafner explained details of the project. NECO currently anticipates installation of 20 GE 1.5

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wind turbines which will have a total height (with blade) of 398 feet. There will be private turbine access roads to each turbine and an underground collector cable network.

The power generated will come into the WAPA system at the Haxtun interconnection substation. Westwood Professional Services has been retained to work on the Environmental Assessment.

Scott indicated that the project could begin as early as the fourth quarter in 2010 or the first two quarters of 2011 and would take approximately six months to construct.

Representatives from DOE and National Wind spent much of the afternoon touring the wind farm footprint with a Fish and Wildlife representative.

Each of the comments was recorded and will be addressed in the Environmental Assessment. If community members were unable to attend the meeting, comments can still be sent to Melissa Rossiter, NEPA Document Manager, Department of Energy 1617 Cole Boulevard, Golden, CO 80401 or by email to Melissa.rossiter@go.doe.gov.