

## **Saline County landowners hear wind farm pitch**

**BY CARA PESEK / Lincoln Journal Star**

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RURAL DORCHESTER — A representative from the nation's largest wind energy development company pitched the creation of a wind farm in central Saline County to a group of about 50 landowners Thursday evening.

Dave Savage, a development manager for Denver-based Renewable Energy Systems Americas Inc., explained to his audience in the basement of the Saline Center that his company has been looking at the development of wind energy resources in six Saline County townships for the past year.

And those at the company liked what they've seen.

It would be feasible, Savage said, for the company to build an 80-turbine wind farm in central Saline County, altering the appearance and economy of the county and generating up to \$12,000 per year per a wind turbine for landowners.

Thursday night's pitch from RES, which also developed Nebraska's largest wind farm, near Ainsworth, was the second such proposal the county has heard in the past month, said Randy Pryor, a University Of Nebraska extension educator in Saline County, and also a local land owner.

"It's a little bit of a gold rush," he said.

The interest of wind development companies has received a mostly warm welcome in Saline County, he said.

"We were initially very excited to see that someone else thinks we have something of value above our land," Pryor said.

But landowners are proceeding cautiously, he said.

Part of Saline County's attraction to potential developers, he said, is that no one in the county has signed away their wind energy rights. Those contracts tend to last for several decades and are therefore nothing to be taken lightly, he said.

During Thursday night's meeting, audience members asked if construction of wind turbines would increase their property taxes, if there was the possibility of eminent domain being used and about specifics of the contracts they would sign if plans for the wind farm proceed.

District 32 Sen. Russ Karpisek of Wilber didn't attend Thursday's meeting, but said beforehand he agreed that landowners need to make sure they know what they're getting into before they sign any contracts.

"I'm all for the wind energy," Karpisek said in a phone interview Thursday. "I think we need to find out how this works."

And how it works in Nebraska is different from other states, he said. As a public power state, electricity costs in Nebraska are lower than most other states, which is among the

reasons there hasn't been as much development of wind energy here, he said. A bill (LB629) passed in 2007 by the Nebraska Legislature, makes it easier for private companies to work with the Nebraska Public Power District to develop wind energy. That has led to some wind farm development, including a project in Bloomfield, Pryor said.

Savage said RES has a good relationship with NPPD. And he told the audience that more detailed information about the company's proposal is on file at the Saline County Courthouse, though those who wish to read it must first sign a confidentiality agreement.

After Thursday's meeting, Pryor said several landowners planned to meet to talk about forming a group of their own, to increase their negotiating power.

It will likely be at least a few years before there are turbines in Saline County — the project is still in the very preliminary stages, and even if contracts are signed, it generally takes about two years to finesse the plans and build the wind farm, Savage said.

And while he's advising landowners to proceed with caution, Pryor doesn't deny the prospect of the wind farm is exciting.

"It would totally change the way the middle of Saline County would look," he said. "That would be the largest project in the state."

*Reach Cara Pesek at 473-7361 or [cpesek@journalstar.com](mailto:cpesek@journalstar.com).*

**come on** wrote on **August 29, 2008 7:13 am:**

" I have 160 acres in Seward County they could put a bunch of windmills on for \$12000 a piece per year. "

**a piece** wrote on **August 29, 2008 7:33 am:**

" Just another farmer wanting to get paid for not farming. Seriously though, look at the market. Maybe 3-4,000 a piece. I'm surprised Saline County has that good of a wind resource. "

**T** wrote on **August 29, 2008 8:36 am:**

" Saline County is like a wind tunnel. Do you even live there to know about wind resource. Someone could sneeze and the Norris Public Power District electrical services go out for the remainder of the night! And do you know the value of land? 3-4 T's a piece is absolutely a bargain for the company not for the farmer. "

**Big Red Skeptic** wrote on **August 29, 2008 10:19 am:**

" Yeah, right, big deal. And when the big, whoopee-wow alternative energy craze falls in the toilet whose gonna tear down and cart away all of those pretty, rusting windmills? "

**In the know** wrote on **August 29, 2008 11:03 am:**

" Land is going for 4500+ in that area right now. I myself have contracts on land in Missouri to build wind turbines and signed them in early 2007. They are expected to start construction next year for 12 3-megawatt turbines on my land. I don't believe that salines would be 3-megawatt. Usually you get 4,000+ a year per megawatt and it just depends the mix of turbines used.

Note to Saline county farmers: don't take the first offer because each year I waited the contract went up at least 15% per year and once one company researches and finds a good wind area many other companies see that and do quick studies and will be offering a better price next year. Especially with costs going down to produce and transport windmills if they are built by Katana industries out of Columbus. They are offering really high leases because of the low cost to transport the windmills, which is often over 30% of the cost to put them up. "

**In the know** wrote on **August 29, 2008 11:08 am:**

" Take a trip east of Rockport Missouri on HWY 136 and you'll see all the windmills going up (100's of them). All one needs to do is find out whose land the windmills are on and talk to the farmers and they'll tell you what they would change in their contracts if they could.

Best way to learn is through the experience of another. That's how I researched for my contracts. I highly recommend the trip to all Saline county farmers pondering a contract. You'll know how to negotiate. "

**darren** wrote on **August 29, 2008 1:21 pm:**

" alternative energy craze? You might want to pull your head out of the...umm sand?. Oil isn't being renewed in our lifetime. It is time to wake up. "

**Its a good thing** wrote on **August 29, 2008 1:27 pm:**

" My home town of Bloomfield has 27 going up and each farmer is getting \$10,000 for the next 20 years. Crofton which is close by is getting about the same amount and one of the farmers negotiated for \$20,000 a year per turbine. It is a very good resource for energy. If Saline county has any questions, they should talk to the farmers in Bloomfield.  
"

**Im in the know too.....** wrote on **August 29, 2008 2:13 pm:**

" ... and that much per turbine is way too much. First off you aren't selling the land, you are leasing it - and these turbines take up hardly any land at all. The ones in Kimball, NE take up less than 10 acres for 7 turbines. The farmer got nice trail roads built to check his cattle and he got a LOT less than 12000 per turbine. Frankly, he got the value of his entire section of land in lease payments after about three years at that kind of price. And he is TICKLED to death!!!! As for the wind resource in Saline County ----- I've worked on statewide wind resource studies and the wind anywhere east of Grand Island is terrible compared to southwest, west, and northern Nebraska. A 10 mph wind is not what you need to build a cost effective wind project. And if you are an electric ratepayer --- any amount gets paid to the farmer out of YOUR pocket. Just a transfer of wealth made possible by the liberal media, the environmental lobby and people like GE and foreign wind turbine manufacturers out to make a buck... "

**Disgusted Lincoln Taxpayer** wrote on **August 29, 2008 2:24 pm:**

" Looks like the subsidy hogs (excuse me, farmers) are slurping it up at the public trough yet again. If a government-subsidized boondoggle like ethanol and the nice USDA subsidy checks that they pocket aren't enough of an outrage, we now have to watch these characters clean up on wind farms, another government-subsidized scam. "

**SJ** wrote on **August 29, 2008 2:25 pm:**

" I hope the Saline County farmers hold out for a C-BED development. Leasing away their wind rights for chump change won't create real rural economic development--a chance for landowners to share in ownership is what is needed. Want to see wind energy development done right? Check out the Pipestone MN area. If Savage is the developer, most of the profits will go to Denver. "

**To disgusted** wrote on **August 29, 2008 3:03 pm:**

" This article is about landowners putting windmills on their property for the benefit of everyone, even Lincoln. They own the land, why wouldn't they be paid for leasing part of it to the wind development company. Please contact the company if you are willing to put a windmill on your property for free. "

The Research Nerd wrote on August 30, 2008 1:10 am:

" If you are interested in what kind of changes industrial scale wind turbines will bring to your community please visit [betterplan.squarespace.com](http://betterplan.squarespace.com).

Here in Wisconsin, our Flight For Life Helicopters will not land in wind farms because of the turbulence behind these 40 story tall machines is comparable to the turbulence behind a 747. In a new study released last week, it's been found that the reason for so many mysterious bat deaths in wind farms is because of something called barotrauma. The bats lungs explode. There are so many better renewable energy options. Wind energy has to have fossil fueled power plants to even function. This means if the grid goes down, so do the turbines. The big push for wind energy has its roots in Enron. Google "Wind turbine" and "Enron" to read more about it. Wind developers are the lowest form of human beings there are next to oil men. Watch the movie "There Will Be Blood"-- it should be called "There Will Be Wind Developers" If wind farms actually reduced green house gasses then maybe they would have some value. But numerous studies, including one by our own National Academy of Sciences (May 2008) have concluded that since they have to be connected to fossil fuel burning power plants and can't function without them, the reduction of green house gasses because of wind energy is negligible.

If it smells like ethanol, and tastes like ethanol, then maybe----- Do some research! Be as depressed as I was when I started to find out the facts about industrial scale wind turbines. "