



November 21, 2008

SALINE COUNTY WIND ASSOCIATION UPDATE

The newly formed Saline County Wind Association had some very successful meetings last week at Saline Center. Landowners listened to the beginnings of something powerful. People in Saline County are beginning to work together to have a vision of a better outcome with wind turbine developments. An outcome that is hoped to be better than what is currently happening in Nebraska with wind right contracts. If a landowner network in this county works together before any wind rights easements are signed, that is a huge accomplishment.

John Hansen, Executive Director of the Farmers Union, explained that he had first hand knowledge that he knew a landowner that had signed their wind rights away for over 50 years for a lump sum payment up front of only \$1,000. We have a lot of elderly landowners in Nebraska and it is terrible to hear these kind of horror stories. I do not think any landowner in Saline County has signed a wind farm option with a developer. That is actually a success or a good thing because language in 50 page landowner contracts need negotiation and quality legal advice.

One landowner in Saline County, who attended both meetings to soak up all the concepts what is being talked about, said the new wind association volunteer directors have a lot of work ahead of them. However, 107 in attendance on Wednesday and 90 landowners on Thursday, will give the group a huge boost and some much needed finances to move forward.

Presently, wind generates only about one percent of the power utilized in the U.S., but is believed that by 2020, six percent of the nation's power will be generated by wind. Nebraska has been slower to develop wind power than other states because we have some of the cheapest electric rates in the nation and we are a public power utility state. Will coal continue to be cheaper than wind power in Nebraska in the next 10 to 20 years? Of interest are the green tags or carbon credits that Nebraska Public Power receives when the purchase power agreement is signed with outside wind farm developers, that is part of the equation.

A web page has been developed to assist landowners in reading about current issues with wind rights contracts. Go to www.saline.unl.edu and there is a link for local landowners to learn. We also have the meeting handouts on the web and will load presentations from Speakers John Hansen, Farmers Union; John Hay, UNL Extension; Willis Luedke, Saline County Commissioner; Russ Karpisek, State Senator; and Wind Association Chair Dave Vavra.

To join the Association, go to the website and fill out the enrollment worksheet by December 15, 2008. The cost to enroll a farm is 50 cents per acre, \$50 minimum fee. From this seed money the group will be able to ask for economic development funds and hire legal services on the behalf of Saline County landowners. If you join the group, there is no guarantees of development or royalties from a wind turbine on your property, but there is hope a landowner friendly agreement could be negotiated for you to then decide on the merits of a project.

For more information, talk to Chairman Vavra or your township directors. They are listed on the website at www.saline.unl.edu. On the front page there is a link to the Wind Association website.



I will give it the old college try to load the speaker clips for out of county and state landlords to see. In the six targeted townships in Saline County, there are 138,000 acres of land and approximately 750 taxpayer contacts. If the Saline County Wind Association receives no financial help from the 750 people involved, they are essentially done, good luck on your own. The association treasurer is Doug Horak, phone 821-2036.

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