

Wind Energy will Heighten the Economy in South Dakota

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Wind energy is the kind of economic development that could convince young people to stay in South Dakota, an official with the Miner County Community Revitalization Corp. said Tuesday.

Within the last year, two wind turbines have been erected in Howard and one each are generating power in Canova and Carthage, said Mike Knutson.

High school students are also being taught about wind energy as a renewable resource, he said at a two-day wind energy workshop in Huron. Hosted by East River Electric Power Co-op, the workshop is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy's Wind Powering America program and the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission.

"We wanted young people to start associating themselves with wind energy," he told a roomful of state and national wind experts as well as South Dakota farmers, business owners and economic development officials.

"If you're going to learn about electricity, why not learn about something in your own back yards opposed to some abstract concept?" Knutson said.

Young people can connect to wind energy because they look to the future and think it's new and cool, he said.

"That's as much of an issue for us in South Dakota with economic development as anything," Knutson said.

"We've got to find cool jobs for those young people; otherwise they're going to go to the places they think are cool whether they are or not," he said.

While Howard can lay claim to being the first South Dakota municipality to own and operate wind turbines - both located in town along Highway 34 - Hyde County has the first wind farm in the state.

Highmore Mayor Mike Newton said the people of his community and county are excited about the 27 turbines, which were built this summer along a ridge

south of town by Florida Power and Light.

Newton said the wind farm will generate \$400,000 to \$450,000 a year in new revenue for Hyde County. Of that, \$250,000 is in the form of property taxes, while affected property owners will receive more than \$100,000 a year. Ground was broken on the project in June and the turbines were switched on earlier this month.

The mayor said sales taxes in Highmore were up more than 40 percent this summer.

"We'd like to be known as the largest and first wind farm in the state of South Dakota," Newton said.

The community is trying to get signs advertising the turbines erected on I-90. The giant blades and towers can be seen from both Highway 34 and Highway 14, he said.

Highmore is also sponsoring a slogan contest for the city.

"I hope we can come up with something terrific that people can relate to," Newton said.

Miner County residents see wind power as a way to be pioneers in the future, just as the settlers were pioneers in the past, Knutson said.

"This is just a new piece of technology and it gives them hope for the future and, frankly, in rural South Dakota we need some of that hope," he said.

Like the rest of the state, the best resource in Howard and Miner County is the people, particularly the young, he said.

"We're hoping wind energy provides an opportunity for us to stop exporting them," Knutson said.

Wind energy in Howard, Canova and Carthage is good for tourism, sales taxes, community pride and as a hedge on energy prices, he said.

"Good things can come to small places," Knutson said.

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