

# Wind energy results in economic development

By: Elisa Sand

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## *Miner County benefits from turbines, helps bring awareness*

The wind turbines in Howard have done more than just produce electricity for area residents. They've brought recognition to the small South Dakota town.

"Everybody asks what they are doing, so evidently they know about them a long ways away," said Howard Mayor Larry Gauger, indicating that he gets inquiries about the wind turbines wherever he goes.

"A lot of people ask about them," he said.

Howard has two wind turbines in the industrial park west of town; they have been producing electricity since December 2001. One turbine was purchased by the city, and the other was purchased by Miner County Community Revitalization.

Two other wind turbines are located in Miner County, one in Canova and one in Carthage. Both were constructed through efforts of MCCR.

"It's been a good thing for the community," Carthage Mayor Kathy Faber said.

So far, Carthage has had no mechanical problems or public dissent regarding the wind turbine, she said.

"If we have to do a lot of major repairs in the future, that would be the only bad thing," she said. "At this point, it hasn't cost us anything."

Canova Mayor Veryle Kurth said the turbine has had a positive impact on the community.

"Wind energy is a great positive," he said. "I anticipate seeing more of it coming in."

More than 300,000 kilowatt hours are generated by Howard's wind turbines in a year's time.

To put that into perspective, according to statistics from Sioux Valley Energy, a resident will generally utilize between 900 and 1,000 kW hours of electricity in a month, and a farm will demand about 1,200 to 1,300 kW hours.

Although each month varies, the combined efforts of the turbines in Howard have so far produced an average of about 26,000 kW hours per month. Production has peaked at 41,900 kW hours in one month's time.

The Canova tower produced about 119,000 kW hours in 2003, averaging 13,250 kW hours; from March 2003 through February 2004, the Carthage tower produced about 159,000 kW hours. (An average production was used for three months where specific kW hours produced were not available.)

Gauger said the only disadvantage so far is on extremely hot or cold days, when electric use peaks. Then the wind doesn't blow and no electricity is produced to offset the demand.

"They've done as good as expected or better," Gauger said.

Although electricity is produced only when the wind blows, and the electricity produced can't be stored by any means, Gauger feels the turbines are "the wave of the future."

The electricity produced by the turbines in Howard is connected to Heartland Consumer Power District, which pays the city of Howard a credit depending on the amount of electricity produced. In Carthage and Canova, the turbines are connected to Xcel energy.

"If it saves some and the people selling you energy can sell it somewhere else, it'll help them out," Gauger said.

The electricity in Howard brings about \$5,500 to the town annually which goes into its general fund. Howard also receives a federal credit, which brought in an additional \$5,000 in 2002. That credit is to be issued again for 2003 and is available to Howard for the first 10 years of production.

In 2003, Carthage earned about \$3,600 for the year and Canova earned about \$3,800. Neither Carthage nor Canova receives the federal credit.

"They (the turbines) have brought us some income," Gauger said. "It didn't lessen the rates but didn't raise the rates, either."

For Carthage, the revenue from the electricity produced by wind turbines has helped offset some of the costs of the municipal electricity, Faber said.

In an indirect manner, she said, that has freed up some funds to be used for other expenses.

In Canova, Kurth said, the revenue has made up for a loss in tax dollars that the community experienced due to fewer businesses.

Gauger said he's mostly heard positive comments from the community about the turbines.

"At first the little bit of noise bothered them (residents), but it isn't any more than a car going by," he said.

All revenue aside, Gauger looks at the benefits more from an economic development perspective.

Energy Maintenance Services, a wind turbine refurbishing company, came to Howard shortly after the turbines were constructed. The owner, Joe Kolbach, is originally from Howard.

"It helped a hometown boy come back," Gauger said.

The key to additional development, Kurth said, is community support and transmission lines for the electricity.

"Getting energy transferred out is the biggest downfall in South Dakota," Kurth said. "I think we should be able to see more in our area and (other areas), if we can get the communities to support it."