

U.S. Wind Force withdraws project application, for now

Developer expects to re-apply for Pendleton utility

BY WILL O'CONNOR • STAFF WRITER

CHARLESTON, W.Va — Liberty Gap Wind Force, LLC — a subsidiary of U.S. Wind Force — withdrew its application to build up to 50 wind turbines along Jack Mountain in southern Pendleton County from the West Virginia Public Service Commission last week, citing the need for more time to compile all the necessary information for the PSC.

“The substantial amount of data that must be provided for a project like this has taken longer to prepare than was expected,” said USWF president Tom Matthews in a Dec. 23 released statement. Matthews went on to say that Liberty Gap plans to reapply to the PSC by the end of March 2005 and USWF remains committed to the project.

Liberty Gap applied to the PSC Nov. 16, and requested the commission to expedite its review in order to qualify for federal tax credits due to expire at the end of 2005. Earlier this month, PSC staff attorney Leslie Anderson recommended the commission take the normal 270 days to review the project. Anderson also sent two letters to Liberty Gap requesting among other things detailed maps, environmental data, wildlife studies, and more information on the transmission line set to run from the project to the north

Franklin substation. USWF was unable to provide the information in time.

“We’re excited about this, of course,” said Robbie Sites, founding member of Friends of Beautiful Pendleton County. He pointed to the large public outcry directed at the project as having a significant effect on the PSC’s reluctance to approve the project without fully reviewing it.

“I hope that other communities and counties gain a little hope from this,” Sites said. “We often feel we can be railroaded by large companies with deep pockets, but we slowed this one down and I think we can stop it.”

Sites pointed to the next phase of his group’s fight as the most critical. He said Liberty Gap would soon begin going door to door seeking a right of way through individual property owners’ land. “This next phase has the potential to divide the county, dividing neighbors, friends, and family for generations,” he said.

Friends of Beautiful Pendleton County is in the process of ensuring property owners know their rights and what’s at stake when dealing with the developer.

FBPC will hold an informational meeting Monday, Jan. 10 at 7 p.m. in the Pendleton County High School auditorium. Everyone is invited to attend.

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