

# Pendleton County Approves Wind Power Facility

Landowners Concerned About Transmission Poles

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FRANKLIN, W.Va. — The Pendleton County Commission has agreed to allow a Delaware company to operate a facility to generate electricity using wind power.

The county commission's decision, however, has upset some landowners who will live under power lines that would be part of the project. They say a public hearing should have been conducted before the unanimous decision was reached.

When the county commission meets Tuesday, several residents are expected to address officials about the project, which was approved Nov. 16.

The commission's agreement with Delaware-based US Wind Force LLC and its subsidiary, Liberty Gap Wind Force LLC, allows construction and operation of the facility, which will transmit power through a 10-mile, 138-kilovolt connection from Jack Mountain to Allegheny Power System's North Franklin Substation.

In the agreement, the commission agreed to acquire the easements necessary for the transmission poles by eminent domain, which gives the government the right to take private property for public use within its jurisdiction.

## **Landowners Concerned**

Several landowners along the path of the 100-foot right of way claim they were not notified about the possible condemnation of their land until the agreement was reached.

The final route of the transmission lines remains under consideration, said commission president Kelly Hartman.

The facility would consist of wind turbines and transmission lines connecting the turbines. It would have substations and an overhead, 138-kilovolt electric transmission line to the Franklin Substation, which will have to be upgraded to accept the electricity. Those upgrades will be funded through its subscribers.

A study by Allegheny Power in 2004 states Liberty Gap Wind Force "wishes to interconnect 112 wind turbine generators for a maximum total generating capability of 200 [megawatts]" at the Pendleton County site, with power production beginning by Jan. 1, 2006.

The intent of the study was to determine the estimated \$930,000 cost and the two-year estimated construction timeline for the systems required to facilitate the addition of the new generating plant.

Liberty Gap has obtained leases on about 6,000 acres on Jack Mountain, 10 miles south of Franklin, where as many as 50 modern wind turbine generators housed in fiberglass enclosures will be mounted on tubular steel towers. Each generator features three-bladed rotors mounted on the upwind side of the tower, with a total height of 320 to 413 feet.

Each turbine will have a total generating capacity in the range of 70 to 100 megawatts and will be located along the crest of the ridgeline, generally located perpendicular to the prevailing winds.

## **Company Contributes Funds**

Liberty Gap has agreed to pay \$100,000 annually to the county for the duration of the project and to make a \$450,000 donation to the commission to be used to construct about 5.5 miles of waterline in the Sandy Ridge area.

The water line is unrelated to the wind-power project.

If the wind-power project will benefit Pendleton County, "the council will be in favor of it. We're looking at progress for the town and the county," said Franklin Mayor Tim Long.

Franklin attorney M. Zelene Harman said she was not notified until Nov. 18 by Commissioner Bob Grimm that her family farm and those of John McCoy, John D. Judy and Eddie Sites were identified as rights of way.

"While supporting clean and alternative energy sources, I strongly disagree with the condemnation of my family farm to construct an above-ground power line for a private concern, and I want to be heard," Harman said.

"Without going into the debatable issues of the viability, aesthetics or environmental impact of wind farms, I object to the county commission's failure to seek even preliminary input by all of the affected landowners prior to entering into a binding contract to take our land for this transmission line."

<http://www.dnronline.com/archives2004/12-03-04/story3.asp>