Company ends bid for wind farm in central Kansas

The Associated Press

A Texas wind energy company has ended its effort to lease land for a potential wind farm in central Kansas.

Horizon Wind Energy, based in Houston, had been working for more than a year to find 10,000 acres to lease in the southeast corner of Reno County.

Company officials said they were only able to reach agreements to lease about 1,000 acres. Other landowners were reluctant to sign long-term agreements because they thought the land would be more valuable for real estate development.

Josh Bohach, development project manager, told The Hutchinson News that community support is necessary for such a project.

"It comes down to a decision on the landowners' part, if it's something welcome or supported," Bohach said. "That's the normal course of business for a development like this."

Horizon Wind has other projects in the early stages of development in Kansas, Bohach said, though, none are in Reno County.

The Horizon Energy project, which was actually filed as two projects for separate phases, is among 99 projects submitted since 2001 that have been withdrawn. It was the only request filed in the past decade within Reno County. Ford County has had the most filings, at 13, of which four remain active.

The amount of land necessary for the turbines, other equipment and linking roads to develop a 100 megawatt farm is relatively small, Bohach said. But leases on the large swaths of contiguous land are necessary to allow siting and leave sufficient undeveloped land around the turbines.

"Geographically, it's a large area," he said. "But what is actually taken out to generate production is only 1 to 3 percent."

Mark Richardson, chairman of the Reno County Wind Energy Task Force, said there are landowners in central Reno County who are interested in leasing their property to wind enengy companies.

Horizon has several other projects it is developing across the state, Bohach said, including one in Ford County called Western Trail awaiting a commercial contract.

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