Wind farms generate power, revenue, say MU Extension specialists

Written by Steve Morse. · July 23, 2008

ROCK PORT, Mo. – The landscape in northwest Missouri is changing. Scattered across three counties, 75 turbines spin to harvest the wind.

University of Missouri Extension specialists say that there are excellent opportunities for sustainable wind power in northwest Missouri. Four wind turbines supply all the electricity for the small town of Rock Port in Atchison County. The city of just over 1,300 residents is the first in the United States to operate solely on wind power.

“That’s something to be very proud of, especially in a rural area like this-that we’re doing our part for the environment,” said Jim Crawford, University of Missouri Extension natural resource engineer. “Anybody who is currently drawing their utility through Rock Port utilities can expect really no rate increase for the next 15 to 20 years.”

There are currently 24 wind turbines in Atchison County, 24 in Nodaway County and 27 in Gentry County. MU Extension specialists say the wind farms will bring in more than $1.1 million annually in county real estate taxes, to be paid by Wind Capital Group, a wind energy developer based in St. Louis.

“This is a unique situation because in rural areas it is quite uncommon to have this increase in taxation revenues,” said Jerry Baker, MU Extension community development specialist.

The alternative-energy source also benefits landowners, who can make anywhere from $3,000 to $5,000 leasing part of their property for wind turbines.

Other wind energy companies are looking at possible sites in northwest Missouri, Baker said.

A map published by the U.S. Department of Energy indicates that northwest Missouri has the state’s highest concentration of wind resources and contains a number of locations potentially suitable for utility-scale wind development.

“We’re farming the wind, which is something that we have up here,” Crawford said. “The payback on a per-acre basis is generally quite good when compared to a lot of other crops, and it’s as simple as getting a cup of coffee and watching the blades spin.”

“It’s a savings for the community in general, savings for the rural electric companies, and it does provide electricity service over at least a 20-year time period, which is the anticipated life of these turbines,” Baker said.

Baker said the wind turbines attract visitors from all over, adding tourism revenue to the list of benefits.

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