Creston Ridge Wind Farm

Loup Power District has entered into an agreement to purchase the electricity produced at a wind farm that is being constructed in northern Platte County by Blue Stem Energy Solutions. A Hot Topic on the Loup Power District home web page has been devoted to following this wind farm project. This Read More document for the Hot Topic will be updated periodically to show progress on the project. So, check back regularly.

Construction Has Begun

Power Line Prep

The Construction Packet for the Linework and Tap has been prepared and approved. The materials have been ordered and are in.

Work at the substations is being done now. At the Creston sub two voltage transformers are being installed. At the Genoa 115kV sub a voltage transformer is being installed. At the Columbus Hydro sub a voltage transformer is being installed and a relay is being changed.

Surveying and Road Prep

Construction has begun on the Creston Ridge Wind Farm. However, there is not a lot happening above ground level at this time. They are preparing the roads that lead to each tower that will be used by the construction crew. They also are surveying and one can see the orange flags that mark the outline for each tower and the center of each tower.

As construction progresses there will be items visible going up above ground.
During the early part of 2015, the District entered into two contracts with Bluestem Energy Solutions (Bluestem) for the purchase of energy generated from a new wind farm that will be built by Bluestem in northern Platte County. The purchase power agreement (PPA) sets forth the parameters regarding the economics of the purchase of this wind energy and the generator interconnect agreement (GIA) sets forth the parameters associated with the energy flowing onto the District’s subtransmission system. The District was in discussions with Bluestem for approximately one year before deciding to move forward with these agreements. Overall this is expected to provide a positive benefit for the District.

The name for the wind farm is the Creston Ridge Wind Farm. It will be located between Humphrey and Creston, on 205th Avenue (also known as 48th Avenue in Columbus, or Mason Road) in northern Platte County between 445th Street and 460th Street. The District has a 34.5kV subtransmission line which runs north and south along 205th Avenue. Bluestem entered into a lease agreement with a local landowner for the land where the turbine towers will be located. Construction of the Creston Ridge Wind Farm started in April of this year and it is expected to be in commercial operation sometime later this summer.

Economically, the power that is purchased from Bluestem is approximately equal in price to that which the District currently purchases from its wholesale supplier, NPPD. One of the benefits of the purchase from Bluestem is that the price of the power which will be purchased is fixed for all 25 years of the term of the PPA. The pricing starts out at a specific price and then a known escalator is applied to this price each year. In this way the District knows exactly what it will pay for this power each and every year. That cannot be said of agreements with other power suppliers. Additionally, if the energy purchased from the Creston Ridge Wind Farm happens to coincide with the peak demand levels the District encounters during the month, savings associated with the purchase of power demand from NPPD will be realized. This can provide another benefit.

Many have questioned why the District decided to move forward with this type of an arrangement. First, the District has no issues with the power purchased from NPPD. Yes there have been deep discussions with NPPD regarding rate increases over the past several years, but overall the District is happy with NPPD as a wholesale supplier. However, the District has heard from a wide variety of customers who are interested in the District becoming more involved in environmentally friendly types of energy generation (such as wind and solar). One of the District’s large customers, BD Medical, even has gone as far as purchasing renewable energy credits through NPPD as part of their goal to become a 100 percent sustainable company. Additionally, state legislators are putting more and more pressure on electric utilities to look at renewable energy resources. This purchase of energy from Bluestem will assist the District in responding to these types of inquiries.

In the future, the District may have additional opportunity to purchase energy from new renewable resources, and the possibility exists to expand the Creston Ridge Wind Farm, or to look at other resources, such as solar energy to supply this power. The District Board looks at all these possibilities, especially as they have the ability to affect customers’ electric rates before making these decisions. The District Board and District management are looking for the long-term solutions to provide the most economical and environmentally friendly combination of contracts to supply power to our customers. All of these options are reviewed carefully before a decision is made. We will continue to work with all of our customers to keep them informed of future decisions.

Neal Suess
President and CEO
Selection of the Name for the Wind Farm

The name selected for the wind farm is Creston Ridge Wind Farm. Loup Power District held a contest among its employees for the naming of the wind farm. The submissions were reviewed by a selection committee consisting of five employees who then chose the name. The employee who made the winning submission was Keith Shonka who is a Meter Relay & Equip Tech at the Columbus Service Center.

Background Information

At their January 27th meeting the Loup Power District Board of Directors approved moving forward with arrangements to purchase electricity from a wind farm project located within the District’s operating area.

Omaha-based Bluestem Energy Solutions will locate, construct, and maintain a wind farm and sell the electricity generated to Loup Power District. The wind farm will consist of 4 towers each capable of generating 1.7 MW (megawatts) of electricity for a total capacity of 6.8 MW.

The Board’s action gave the approval for Loup’s management team to move forward and enter into a purchase power agreement (PPA) and associated generator interconnect agreement (GIA) with Bluestem Energy Solutions for the purchase of renewable energy.

“Besides the benefits of renewable energy, this project will provide tax benefits to the area,” stated Bob Cerv, Chairman of the Board. “The property taxes paid by the project will benefit local county governments and local school districts. Additionally, this area will see some economic development benefits during the construction and operation of the wind farm.”

Construction on the wind farm could start in the next few months. It will be located between Columbus and Creston near Mason Road (48th Avenue). Power generation at the site could start by October or November.

The name of the wind farm will be Creston Ridge Wind Farm.

The power generated at the wind farm will be less than 1 percent of the total amount used by Loup’s 19,000+ customers. The wind project will add another climate-friendly renewable energy source to the District. Loup Power District currently operates two hydro generating units, one near Columbus and the other near Monroe.