

# Wind-energy politics finally comes of age

**F**OR years, it was thought that Illinois lacked commercially viable wind power. However, in 2001, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory of the U.S. Department of Energy drew new maps for the state and identified several so-called good wind areas within it.

A year later, former Illinois Gov. George Ryan issued an ex-

ecutive order committing the state to purchase electricity generated by renewable-energy resources — wind, solar, organic waste biomass, or existing hydroelectric power. By 2010, the state must purchase enough renewable power to supply at least 5% of the electricity used by buildings owned or operated by agencies under the governor's control. That

amount will increase to 15% by 2020.

Building on Ryan's order, in 2005 the Illinois Commerce Commission adopted a resolution creating renewable-energy portfolio goals for Illinois utilities. These guidelines suggest that renewable-energy sources make up 2% of utilities' bundled retail loads by 2007, increasing to 8% by 2013.

According to the commission, 75% of the renewable energy should come from wind, and the utilities' renewable-energy expenditures may not increase retail electricity rates by more than 0.5% a year.

## Sweetening the pot

Federal tax incentives also make wind projects attractive for developers. In December 2006, Congress extended the Production Tax Credit for wind and other renewable energies, which provides a 1.9-cent-per-kilowatt-hour tax credit for electricity generated over the first 10 years of a project's operation.

Of course, big pockets don't hurt either. Illinois' Crescent Ridge wind farm in Bureau County and the GSG Wind Farm Phase I currently under construction in Lee and LaSalle counties are backed by a division of the global investment firm Babcock & Brown of San Francisco.

In 2005, Horizon Wind Energy was acquired by one of the world's largest investment banks, Goldman Sachs. Because of this, Twin Grove's status as Illinois' largest wind farm may be short-lived.

Still in the planning stages, Horizon's proposed Blackstone Wind Farm just north of Pontiac could be over twice as large at 900 megawatts, says Bob Crowell, the company's Midwest region development director.

# Stand up, be counted in annual farm survey

**I**T'S your chance to set the record straight about the issues that affect you, and to help ensure that policies and programs are based on accurate, real-world data. At least that's the goal of the annual Agricultural Resource Management Survey that's now going out to 36,000 farmers nationwide.

Through mid-April, the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service field offices will contact farmers by mail or phone to complete the survey. Producers will be asked to provide data on their operating expenditures, production costs and household characteristics.

The survey is USDA's primary source of information on production practices, resource use and economic well-being of America's farm households.

"Just about every federal policy and program that affects U.S. farmers and farm families is based on information from ARMS," says Brad Schwab, director of the NASS

Illinois field office. "This information is used not just by USDA and Congress, but also by the Illinois Farm Bureau, Illinois Farmers Union, agribusinesses and others who make the decisions that shape the future of Illinois agriculture.

"All farm operators rely on quality information and sound government policies in order to run a successful business. That's why participation in ARMS is so important," Schwab explains.

"Producer participation in ARMS ensures that decisions affecting farmers, their families, their businesses and their communities are based on the facts, straight from the source."

Survey responses will be compiled and the farm economic data published in the annual Farm Production Expenditures report, to be released on Aug. 2.

■ You can find all NASS reports online at [www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov).

## Carlock: A community divided over wind

**D**EVELOPER Horizon Wind Energy met with only a few objections to the Twin Groves wind farm near Ellsworth. However, 35 miles away, Chicago-based Invenery Wind Energy LLC has met with significant opposition to its proposed White Oak Wind Energy Center.

White Oak would straddle the McLean-Woodford county line, which is where the points of contention start. McLean County requires a 1,500-foot residential setback for wind turbines; Woodford County requires only a 750-foot setback.

The standing-room-only crowds for Woodford County Zoning Board's public hearings on the proposed project, abundant letters to the editor in newspapers and contributions to online anti-wind forums highlight the division in the community of Carlock. Unlike Ellsworth, Carlock has more smaller-tract owners, many of whom moved to the community from larger cities.

"It's tempting to simply attribute controversies like this to rural vs. urban," says Ann Reisner, professor of human and community development at the University of Illinois. "However, at their core, they are not so much about that as they are about democratic decision making.

"Many rural communities don't specifically address the issue of development until after they're faced with it — whether it's a factory coming to town or a local farmer deciding to set up a large hog farm," she says.

Deciding what constitutes good development, who has the right to develop, who should benefit from development and at whose expense development happens all are important for a community.

"Community divisions like that can take years to heal, if they ever do," says Reisner.



## One-turbine wind projects pave the way

**W**IND power is becoming a reality for more than the large, commercial-scale wind farms transforming thousands of acres of Illinois countryside. A handful of one-turbine wind projects are paving the way for others to tap renewable, homegrown energy from the skies.

Wind turbines come in a variety of sizes and costs. The can start at around \$30,000, while the sky is the limit for the largest projects.

In 2005, Bureau Valley High School near Manlius became the first Illinois school to cut its electric costs with wind power. Using a single 270-foot, 660-kilowatt turbine, the school saved \$100,000 in electricity costs the first year alone. State grants paid for half of the project's \$1 million price tag, while the school took out a 10-year loan to finance the remainder.

More school districts are considering their own turbines. Tricia Williams and other Tri Valley board members from McLean County are researching wind power with representatives from the Bureau Valley School District.

Two years ago, Illinois Rural Electric Cooperative's Pike County turbine also went online to help provide power for the co-op's 10,000-plus consumer-owners. Capable of generating up to 1.65 megawatts, the co-op's turbine is the same size of those in the Twin Groves Project.

## Inside Illinois Ag Briefs

### Pioneer beefs up research farms

Pioneer Hi-Bred International Inc. will add staff and expand its seed research operations in Champaign, Princeton and Macomb as part of a new \$100 million investment to increase its speed-to-market for new seed products. Pioneer Hi-Bred is a subsidiary of DuPont, which recently announced plans to add more than 400 positions at 67 Pioneer research locations. Pioneer currently has 92 centers globally. The investment is the largest year-to-year increase in research in the 81-year history of Pioneer. For 2007, Pioneer has introduced 86 new corn hybrids in North America, of which 17 are from new genetic families and 16 are triple stacks. Pioneer has launched 20 new soybean varieties for 2007 planting in North America as well. "The global demand for agricultural crops is very strong," says William Niebur, vice president of DuPont crop genetics research and development. "We have the science to help farmers and others across the value chain meet the growing demand. This additional investment will allow us to put that science to work for our customers faster."

### Mid-Tech, LH-Agro become TeeJet

The Mid-Tech and LH-Agro brands are now being sold under the TeeJet brand name. TeeJet acquired Midwest Technologies and LH Technologies in 2000 and the brand change is the last phase of the acquisition process. The actual product lines, field representatives or technical support teams remain unchanged. TeeJet is located in Wheaton and Springfield.

### Pork producers select 2007 officers

Brian Sturtevant, Lanark, was elected president of the Illinois Pork Producers Association at the group's annual meeting during the 2007 Illinois Pork Expo. Sturtevant is a partner with his father and brother in their family's farming operation in Carroll County in northwestern Illinois. They are involved in three different sow co-ops and raise 60,000 pigs per year. The family also has 2,500 acres of crops. Other IPPA officers elected were: president-elect, Phil Borgic, Nokomis; vice president-treasurer, Brent Scholl, Polo; and secretary, Mike Haag, Emington. IPPA board members re-elected to a three-year term included: Darrell Stitzel from Shannon; Brent Scholl from Polo; Mike Haag from Emington; Dave Conrady from Elkhart; and Art Lehman from Strawn.