

## Livestock

# Producers pool wind resources

By ROBERT WAGGENER

**W**YOMING ag producers interested in attracting a wind company to their land can turn to an area USDA office for assistance.

"Once we get several neighbors interested in a wind farm, I will help them put an association together to attract a wind company," says Grant Stumbough, coordinator for the USDA Resource Conservation and Development office

## Key Points

- USDA can help landowners interested in creating a wind farm form an association.
- Landowners can usually get a better price when they work together.
- The Slater Wind Energy Association represents 50 landowners.

covering Albany, Converse, Goshen, Laramie and Platte counties.



**HOLDING THE FUTURE:** Southeast Wyoming ag producer Gregor Goertz, who is chairman of the Slater Wind Energy Association, believes the development of wind energy in Wyoming and other Western states will help keep ranches and farms in the family, including his own. Goertz holds granddaughter Laynie.

"Landowners can usually get a much better price when they work together instead of independently because they are blocking up large, continuous tracts of land, which is much more appealing to developers," Stumbough says.

In less than two years, Stumbough has helped dozens of landowners form 11 associations.

Among them is the Slater Wind Energy Association, which represents 50 landowners on the Platte-Goshen County line south of Wheatland.

"We're real close to signing a lease with a company," association chairman Gregor Goertz said in December. "The lease would allow the company to study the wind, and they could then exercise an option to develop a wind farm."

SWEA members own from 5 to 3,500 acres, but by pooling their lands they can offer a 30,000-acre tract.

"We felt it was beneficial to work together to offer a larger block to potential developers," Goertz says.

"We're doing a community model where everyone in the association gets a share of the revenue, not just those with turbines on their property. We're doing that because we believe everyone in the community will be impacted by a wind farm regardless if it's on their property or not," Goertz says.

"We want to be good neighbors and take care of any protests prior to development," he adds.

## Sustainability factor

Speaking personally, he says, "Hopefully a wind farm will enable us and the next generation to stay in business." The Goertz family raises dryland wheat, oats, barley and cattle.

They also direct-market natural and organic beef under the name "Wyoming Pure Natural Beef."

Six Albany County ranches formed the Windy Ranchers Association last year.

"There is the old saying 'Two heads are better than one,'" quips member David "Pep" Speiser, who, along with wife Kathy, runs a 570-head commercial Angus operation northwest of Laramie.

## They said it

"We have our land leased to PacifiCorp for a wind farm, and they have exercised an option to develop a project by 2010. It's our hope the wind farm would add some stability to our ranching operation today and for future generations. It should allow us to pay off some debt and possibly purchase some more land."



**Scott Sims, cattle producer, McFadden, Wyo.**



"Wind is another source of energy our state and country really need to pursue, and it's also good for agriculture. It will help keep ranchers and farmers in Wyoming and elsewhere on their land because of the revenue it generates, and some of the best wind in the country is right here in south-eastern Wyoming."

**Jim Rogers, cattle producer, Laramie, Wyo.**

"We got together because we thought there would be a much better chance of getting companies to look at us if we pooled our properties. We also thought we might get a better deal."

With the help of Stumbough, Albany County rancher Jim Rogers, a Cheyenne, Wyo., attorney and previous work by other Wyoming wind associations, the Windy Ranchers developed a "request for proposals" and sent it to some 50 companies.

"Six were interested, and we're working with one company right now on a possible wind lease," Speiser said in December. "We all sat down together. We listened to what they had to propose, and we shared ideas. We want to get a deal that is good for both of us — a partnership."

Other members of the Windy Ranchers include the Bath Brothers, Hall, Harris and Johnson 99 ranches and a ranch owned by Tom and Nancy Dunn.

*Waggener writes from Laramie, Wyo.*

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## Wyoming college offers new wind program

**C**HEYENNE, Wyo.-based Laramie County Community College, like the state's ranchers and farmers, is tapping into Wyoming's most abundant natural resource — wind.

LCCC last fall launched its new Wind Energy Technician Program, which will help fill the industry's need for qualified technicians.

LCCC is one of only eight colleges in the country offering such a program, according to the college.

"The program is designed to recognize and address the skill set needed for individuals who are interested in working in this field on utility-scale machines," says Mike Schmidt, who is overseeing the new LCCC program. "Students will be able to understand the machine inside and out, understand the systems, do the repairs and do the services required."

Each megawatt of wind energy creates about 15 to 20 direct and indirect jobs, and many of these jobs are in rural areas.

As of December, 21 full-time and two part-time students were enrolled in the LCCC program.

■ For more information, go to [www.lccc.cc.wy.us/Index.aspx?page=277&recordid=264&returnURL=/index.aspx](http://www.lccc.cc.wy.us/Index.aspx?page=277&recordid=264&returnURL=/index.aspx) or call 307-432-1647.