

**REGIONAL NEWS**

# World's largest wind farm on the rise in northwestern ND

By SUE ROESLER  
Farm & Ranch Guide

It's not just durum and canola that will be growing tall on northwestern North Dakota farms next year - some large capacity wind turbines will be rising right along side them, too.

Producers are excited that one of the largest wind farms in the country will be rising on acres that stretch in a diagonal line known as the upper northwestern Missouri Coteau from Berthold to Columbus, near the Canadian border.

"Everybody is talking about it," said Lenny Rodin, a small grains producer who farms west of Kenmare. "It's exciting for farmers around here."

Denali Energy plans to construct a 1,000 megawatt wind farm in two phases on 43,000 acres, said Curt Johnson, a native of North Dakota who grew up in the northwestern region, and now is CEO and chairman of the board of the renewable energy company based in Baxter, Minn.

"It's extraordinary to be working with the agriculture contingent," said Johnson, whose relatives were farmers in northwestern North Dakota.

"We are working one on one with producers in that area.

They will be sharing in the revenues, too," he said, adding they also receive payments for each tower. So far, they have around 80 landowners and producers signed up with some 200 more in the process of signing up.

Each wind turbine generates about 1.5 megawatts and needs about one acre of land, but crops and/or livestock can share the acres right along with the turbine, according to Johnson.



**Curt Johnson**

"Crops can grow right up to the base," he said.

The first phase of the project, known as Hartland Wind Farm, LLC, will build 333 General Electric wind turbines in 2009 and 2010. Phase two will double that number and go up in the following year.

U.S. Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., has called North Dakota "the Saudi Arabia of wind," and that is backed up by the American Wind Energy Association who lists the state as having the most wind energy production potential in the nation followed by Texas, second, and Kansas, third.

"North Dakota has the most wind, and it's great producers are getting an opportunity to take advantage of that," Johnson said.

This will likely become the largest wind farm in the state and one of the largest in the world so far.

According to Environment News Service, when finished, the largest wind farm in the world could be the Pampa Wind Project in Texas which began constructing 667 wind turbines this summer. It plans to finish the project with 2,700 turbines by 2014.

But North Dakota could speed ahead of that wind farm by then.

Johnson said there is a lot more to a wind farm than just turbines. Substations, transformers, transmission lines

and other infrastructure will also be built - and structures will be high-tech enough that they will be able to meet the ever-increasing advances in wind technology.

"There's so many advances in wind energy technology coming," he said. "I'm a firm believer in (the fact that) technology will only be enhanced by the infrastructure."

Energy from the farm will eventually be enough to send both east and west, Johnson said.

Denali is entering into 40-year agreements with each landowner, which is a considerable investment for the company. It plans to spread out the \$1.2 billion investment over that time, he said.

This week, the Senate approved an extension of the federal production tax credit, which provides incentives for the development of renewable energy. It was a part of the bailout program.

Johnson said they were glad to hear about that credit, but they have the funds to build the wind farm even without it in place.

He said producers take on more risk planting their crops and raising their calves each spring than anyone else in any other type of career takes.

"There's no greater risk than the risk these producers take every year," he said. "This opportunity will give them the chance to hedge their bets." \*

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