

## North Dakota regulators approve \$350M wind farm

By JAMES MacPHERSON, Associated Press

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BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota's Public Service Commission on Wednesday approved a \$350 million, 200 megawatt wind farm in the southeastern part of the state that has the capacity to power up to 60,000 homes.

The regulators' action came after Edina, Minn.-based Geronimo Energy agreed to delete nine of the proposed 136 turbines from their plan after safety concerns were brought up by the owner of a crop-spraying business in Courtenay.

"I'm not opposed to the wind farm — just the ones that were in close proximity to my runway and posed a safety hazard," crop sprayer [Robert Sprague](#) told [The Associated Press](#). "Now, it gives me enough room to get in and out safely."

Sprague and the state [Aeronautics Commission](#) opposed the developer's original plan that would have placed some turbines within 2 miles of Sprague's private runway in Stutsman County. The [Federal Aviation Administration](#) forbids the placement of wind turbines within 2 miles of a public runway but has no such rules for private runways, said [Brian Kalk](#), who heads the [North Dakota Public Service Commission](#). The three-member commission regulates utilities, wind farms, coal mining, pipelines, grain elevators, telecommunications and auctioneers.

Geronimo Energy's Courtenay Wind Farm project covers some 21,000 acres in Stutsman County, or about 33 square miles. The company said it has leased land from about 60 landowners in the county.

Geromino spokeswoman [Betsy Engelking](#) said the company plans to start construction this year, with completion done by late next year.

"We want to be up and spinning in 2014," she said.

[Xcel Energy Inc.](#) signed an agreement earlier this year to buy all power produced from the wind farm. Financial terms were not disclosed.

Engelking said the wind farm will provide nearly \$1 million in annual tax revenue for Stutsman County and will create an estimated 200 construction jobs and up to 10 permanent jobs in North Dakota.