

Planned wind farm sold; Courtenay Wind Farm will now be built by Xcel

By [Keith Norman](#) on May 1, 2015 at 1:22 p.m.

A wind farm project planned for northeastern Stutsman County has changed hands. The \$300 million Courtenay Wind Farm will now be built by Xcel Energy, according to Mark Nisbet, North Dakota principal manager for Xcel Energy.

Xcel Energy had previously committed to purchase the electricity generated by the wind farm. It will now be responsible for the construction and operation of the wind farm. The project includes 100 turbines producing 200 megawatts of electricity over a 25,000-acre area near Courtenay.

The Courtenay Wind Farm had been planned and developed by Geronimo Energy. Permits were issued by the North Dakota Public Service Commission and the Stutsman County Commission in 2013 but construction never started.

Nisbet said the sale must be approved by the North Dakota Public Service Commission and the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission before the deal is finalized. Those approvals are expected in August.

Members of the North Dakota Public Service Commission could not be reached for comment Thursday.

Road upgrades and new construction would start as soon as regulatory approval was complete along with building foundations for the 100 turbine towers in the project, Nisbet said. The towers and turbines would be installed in the spring of 2016 with the project completed by the end of the year.

Nisbet said the project purchase is a good deal for Xcel Energy.

“From our point of view, this is a project that people are interested in,” he said. “It is a tool for farmers and ranchers to keep the family on the farm and it is a tool to lower the carbon emissions of our company.”

Betsy Engelking, vice president of Geronimo Energy, said the sale is part of Geronimo’s business plan.

“Geronimo is a development firm,” she said. “We find the land and get the permits, but we always have a third party come in.”

A press release dated April 30 from Xcel Energy said Geronimo decided to exit the project for various reasons. This offered Xcel an opportunity to keep the project alive.

“We are glad for the opportunity to preserve the benefits of this project for our customers,” the press release said. “The Courtenay Wind Farm has the added value of locating an important generation resource in North Dakota, an important part of our service territory.”

Engelking said Geronimo was transferring to Xcel all assets of the project including the land leases, easements and project plans it had acquired or developed. Xcel will be bound by the same terms and conditions as landowners had negotiated with Geronimo.

Engelking said letters of explanation were being sent to landowners within the project.

“When a project is sold, people wonder if the project will remain the same,” she said. “The answer is yes. The leases are the same. Xcel has the same commitments to the project that Geronimo had. Essentially, the project promised to the landowners remains the same.”

The project will employ about 200 people during the construction phase and 10 people during operations. It is estimated to pay about \$850,000 per year in local taxes.

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