

Regulators approve Xcel Energy ownership of 100-turbine wind farm in N.D.



Xcel Energy

By [Mike Nowatzki](#) on Aug 24, 2015 at 8:05 p.m.

B ISMARCK – Regulators granted a request Monday by Xcel Energy to take ownership of a 100-turbine wind farm project in southeastern North Dakota, lauding it as the Minneapolis-based utility's first electrical generation asset in a state where it has done business for more than century.

Commissioners approved permits for the Courtenay Wind Farm in northeastern Stutsman County in November 2013 after the developer, Edina, Minn.-based Geronimo Energy, agreed to change the locations of some turbines to accommodate an aerial spraying business.

However, Geronimo couldn't secure financing or a third-party partner for the \$300-million-plus project, according to PSC filings.

Xcel, which originally planned to purchase the power from the 200-megawatt wind farm, will now develop, build, own and operate it, stepping into some of the same contracts Geronimo had secured.

"They really are just kind of picking up where the other company left off," PSC Chairwoman Julie Fedorchak said.

Construction is expected to start within a week, and Xcel hopes to have the

turbines in service by late next year, providing enough energy to power about 105,000 homes, said David Sederquist, Xcel's regulatory affairs manager for North Dakota.

Commissioner Brian Kalk said Xcel's ownership of the wind farm removes "the middleman" and will save consumers money. The cost savings to ratepayers from Xcel's ownership versus a power purchase agreement is estimated to be \$97 million over the life of the project, Fedorchak.

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission previously approved the project, Sederquist said.

Xcel provides electric service to roughly 90,000 customers in and around Fargo, Grand Forks and Minot, and the PSC has for years encouraged the utility to establish electric generation in North Dakota, Kalk said.

"That to me is what's significant about this wind farm," he said.

Xcel Energy also will have ownership in the \$200 million, 150-megawatt Border Winds project in Rolette and Towner counties in north-central North Dakota when it's completed, hopefully by year's end, Sederquist said.

The PSC on Monday also scheduled a public hearing for a proposed \$248.5 million, 75-turbine wind farm north of Tioga in Williams County, which Kalk said would be the first wind farm in that area of northwestern North Dakota.

The hearing on the siting application for the 150-megawatt Lindahl Wind Project is set for 8 a.m. Oct. 8 at Neset Consulting Service, 6844 Highway 40, Tioga.

Reach Nowatzki at (701) 255-5607 or by email at mnowatzki@forumcomm.com (<mailto:mnowatzki@forumcomm.com>).

Mike Nowatzki

Mike Nowatzki reports for Forum News Service. He can be reached at (701) 255-5607.

mnowatzki@forumcomm.com

