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Grand Prairie Wind Farm Blades Arrive In O'Neill

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Wind Farm Blades being unloaded

Railroad workers began unloading the windmill blades that will be used in the Grand Prairie Wind Farm project on Tuesday, April 5 east of O'Neill.



Posted: Tuesday, April 5, 2016 10:35 am | Updated: 1:19 pm, Tue Apr 5, 2016.

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 Posted on Apr 5, 2016
by [Terry Miles](#)
and [Amanda Sindelar](#)

O'Neill is the last stop on the railroad and today a trainload of wind tower blades destined for the Grand Prairie Wind Farm northeast of O'Neill have arrived and are being

unloaded for use in the project.

Owned by BHE Renewables, LLC, a subsidiary of Berkshire Hathaway Energy Company, the 400-megawatt project is the largest wind energy project in the state's history. Once completed in December 2016, the project will generate clean renewable energy equivalent for approximately 120,000 average Nebraska homes. The project's output is being sold to OPPD.

"We began upgrading the public roads in August and started access road and foundation installations and construction of two project substations in September," said BHE Renewables Project Manager Alicia Knapp.

M.A. Mortenson Construction, a leading renewable energy contractor, is building the project for BHE

Renewables. Mortenson's work will include erecting 200 Vestas V110 2.0 megawatt turbines and the construction of the foundations, access roads, and underground collection systems as well as two substations and a transmission line.

"Logistics are a key part of wind farm construction. Right now we are installing the infrastructure (e.g. access roads and turbine foundations) that will support the turbine delivery and construction sequence for next year. When the wind turbine components are delivered to the site they will arrive in complete sets, each destined for a specific turbine site," Knapp said. "For example, towers come in three sections (base, mid and top) and will be delivered as full matching sets; the same is true of turbine blades. Having all the infrastructure in place in the proper order ensures all of the components can be delivered to the appropriate locations and will be key to successful turbine erection next year."

The project is spread over approximately 45,000 acres of farm and pasture land in northeast Holt County; however, each turbine requires a little less than a 1/2 acre and the remainder of the land will continue to be farmed. The first turbine scheduled to be erected in May 2016 will be located approximately 3 miles west of the county shed north of Page.

"We have around 90 crew members at this time," said Wind Site Manager Josh Howard. "Next May when we start

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the turbine component deliveries and turbine erection activities, we will have around 300 to 350 crew members."

The Holt County Board of Supervisors and the Planning and Zoning Commission members established a county road agreement with the company prior to construction.

"There are water trucks spraying water on the roads to contain the dust all day long. With the amount of traffic these roads are seeing, the dust could be hazardous," said Chairman Bill Tielke. "This is no cost to the Holt County taxpayers because this was part of the road haul agreement."

Both Knapp and Howard said BHE Renewables plans to leave the roads in "the same or better" condition than they were in before construction began.

"After each turbine location is surveyed and staked, construction begins. Access roads are constructed from the public roads to the turbine location. The access roads are used during construction for equipment and erection crane travel as well as personnel travel," Howard said. "Approximately 48 feet is cleared for the access road to facilitate transport of the erection crane."

This includes removing existing vegetation and top soil which will later be replaced.

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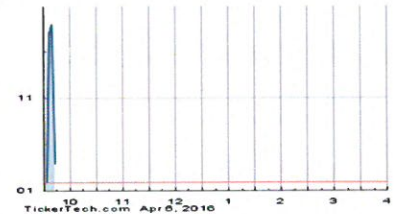
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