

OMAHA PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT ANNOUNCES HISTORIC WIND ENERGY PURCHASE

Clean Air Advocates Applaud Commitment to Clean Energy, Urge OPPD to Finalize Commitment to Retiring Aging North Omaha Coal Plant

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OMAHA, Neb. – Today, the Omaha Public Power District (OPPD) Board of Directors voted unanimously to purchase 400 megawatts of wind power capacity by the end of 2013 from the Grande Prairie wind farm near O’Neill, Neb. OPPD only considered wind farms located in Nebraska in its purchase. This historic investment in wind is the largest single investment in wind energy by a Nebraska utility, and will save OPPD customers money while spurring economic development across the state. This purchase puts OPPD on the path to generating 30 percent of its energy from renewable sources by the end of 2015.

“Today’s announcement shows significant leadership from OPPD’s board and staff to embrace a clean energy economy at a time when wind energy is available at an all-time low cost,” said **Graham Jordison, Field Organizer with the Sierra Club Beyond Coal campaign in Omaha.** “Thousands of Omaha residents have turned out to board meetings, signed petitions, written letters and spoken out for OPPD to invest in Nebraska-based energy. This investment demonstrates that OPPD has been listening to its customer-owners.”

OPPD estimated that construction costs for the Grande Prairie wind farm will total \$700 million, which will provide significant economic development for the local community near O’Neill and the entire state of Nebraska. The Grande Prairie wind farm will be constructed by Geronimo Energy, a Minnesota-based developer of utility-scale wind and solar energy projects throughout the United States. OPPD noted that operation of the wind farm would create 15 to 20 permanent jobs.

“OPPD’s investment in wind energy is public power at its best,” said **Ken**

Winston, Policy Advocate with the Nebraska Sierra Club. “The board and management heard the call for clean energy, found Nebraska wind projects and locked in low-cost clean energy that will provide benefits to customer-owners for years to come. This is a huge win for OPPD customer-owners, and we applaud the board for making this historic investment in clean energy.”

OPPD’s investment in wind has the potential to spur economic development in Nebraskan communities and to bring innovative companies to the state. Companies like Google and Facebook had previously overlooked Nebraska in favor of Iowa in search of more clean energy to power the companies’ data centers. This spring, Facebook announced plans to build a new data center near Des Moines, Iowa instead of Kearney, Neb., [citing Iowa's options for renewable energy as a deciding factor for the data center location](#). Just across the state line in Council Bluffs, IA, [Google has invested a total of \\$1.5 billion in its Southlands data center as well](#).

The Grande Prairie wind farm that OPPD will purchase energy from was recently passed over by Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) in a vote on new wind energy investments. NPPD’s own economic development study found that total local earnings, payments and income from the Grande Prairie wind farm could top \$169.1 million, creating an estimated 60 permanent jobs in the region over the next 20 years.

“OPPD’s major investment in wind puts Omaha on the path to becoming a clean energy leader in our region,” said **Sharif Lirawu, President of the Malcolm X Foundation in North Omaha**. “This announcement encourages us that OPPD has listened to our concerns, not just about adding wind, but about finalizing a commitment to retire the North Omaha plant. Reducing dependence on coal will clean up our air and make it easier for residents living with asthma to breathe in North Omaha.”

“Our public power districts don’t need to send our money out of state to Wyoming to buy dirty coal when we have clean energy solutions right here in Nebraska,” said **Jordison**. “As we boost Nebraska’s clean energy economy, now is the time when OPPD must make a commitment to cleaning up the air in North Omaha by putting its North Omaha coal plant on a path to retirement.”

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