

Landowner concerns addressed at wind farm meeting

More than 170 concerned area landowners showed up at an Extension co-sponsored meeting in Hamburg Oct. 9 to learn more about the benefits and the pitfalls of large-scale wind energy generation in Iowa.

“Industrial scale wind farms are relatively new to southwest Iowa,” said Fremont County Extension Education Director, Doug Doty. “We have a major wind energy developer looking at this area and many landowners don’t feel they know enough about the subject to ask good questions. We felt Extension could play a major role in providing unbiased information.”



Featured speaker, Roger McEowen, Leonard Dolezal Professor in Agricultural Law at Iowa State University, provided detailed background information on various forms of energy generation and said that wind holds great promise. But, he cautioned area residents about legal issues and signing contracts too quickly. “The most common shortcomings we see are that these agreements may extend too long into the future, offer inadequate compensation to landowners, bind farmers unilaterally to contract terms and create unequal bargaining power,” McEowen said. He added that landowners should always have any proposed agreement evaluated by legal counsel and try to negotiate any unfavorable terms they find.

Those attending also heard the experiences of land owners in Adair and Union counties who banded together in 2007 to successfully negotiate more favorable contract terms with wind companies there.

Fremont County supervisor, John Whipple, said the big turnout Oct. 9 was indicative of residents’ uneasiness both with contract terms being offered and the idea of wind turbines in general. “The contracts are long and detailed,” Whipple said. “People are concerned about all the fine print. And, they wonder how it may affect relationships with their neighbors—whether they sign or whether they don’t.”



Adair County
Free Press
photo

The proposed wind farm in Fremont and Page counties is being developed by a company that already has a similar project under way just across the border in Atchison County, Missouri. If completed, the southwest Iowa phase could include 50-125 turbines, each with a rated generating capacity of 2 megawatts of electricity. Besides direct lease payments to landowners, the project could add millions of dollars in assessed valuation to county property tax roles over time.

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- John Whipple, Fremont County Supervisor

For more detailed information regarding wind energy generation and accompanying legal issues, visit the ISU Center for Ag Law and Taxation, <http://www.calt.iastate.edu/briefs/CALTLegalBrief-WindEnergyProduction-LegalIssues.pdf>

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