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The Texas Panhandle Has Wind Energy Potential

FLOYDADA, Texas, August 17, 2009 – Landowners in the panhandle of Texas know the wind blows and many of them are starting to question why they haven't seen more wind energy development in the area. At a recent meeting held in Floyd County, experts reassured landowners that there is still potential for wind energy development.

Richard Amato, president and CEO of Venti Energy and wind subcommittee chair for the Texas Renewable Energy Industries Association (TREIA) was the first speaker at Caprock Plains Wind Energy Association's (CPWEA) annual membership meeting. Amato presented the attendees with a wind industry update, explaining that wind energy development in Texas has come a long way but it still has the potential to grow.

Texas is ranked first in the nation for wind development with 8,361 MW of installed capacity at the end of June. Texas currently creates 3.5 percent of its energy from wind, making it seventh in the nation for percentage of overall wind-generated energy. This year has been a slow year for wind development in comparison to the previous couple of years in which Texas, as well as the entire nation, saw rapid growth throughout the industry, but wind still has a place in the Texas panhandle.

“Even though market conditions are depressed right now there is still a lot of room for potential growth,” Amato commented. “This isn't a dying industry, there is only room to improve; we have barely scratched the tip of potential for wind.”

The potential for wind energy development in the caprock plains region of Texas is great and offers many benefits, including: job creation, additional income for farmers, and increased tax bases bringing money to school, hospitals, etc. Amato pointed out that the Competitive Renewable Energy Zones (CREZ) process, which will allow the wind-rich panhandle to send energy generated by wind to load centers like Austin, Dallas and San Antonio, is critical so we can continue to develop wind farms and reap the benefits associated with development.

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“As a company we are interested in the area,” Amato said. “We are looking for innovative ways to work with landowners to develop wind projects.”

Cameron Fredkin, director of project development for Cross Texas Transmission, also spoke during the recent CPWEA meeting about the CREZ process and their involvement in this expansive build out of the Texas transmission grid.

Cross Texas Transmission is a subsidiary of LS Power Development, LLC and was selected by the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT) to permit, construct, own and operate over 230 miles of 345 kV transmission lines in the Texas Panhandle as a part of the CREZ process.

As a transmission service provider, Cross Texas Transmission is already doing their part to help revitalize communities in the area even though they are only in the preliminary stages of the CREZ process. One of Cross Texas Transmission’s goals is to build a Texas based project development team. Through the transmission build out they want to continue to provide employment in Texas, especially the panhandle.

Currently Cross Texas is working on identifying geographically diverse routes which they will submit to the PUCT sometime next year. It is important for them to be in close contact with landowners throughout the region during the entire process and they have opened a local office in Pampa, Texas, to help facilitate communication with local landowners.

“Cross Texas Transmission is committed to communicating with stakeholders throughout the process,” Fredkin said. “We have an open door policy and encourage interested parties to contact us. We recognize that communication is essential as we develop the transmission expansion plan and we would forward to working with landowners throughout the panhandle region.”

If you would like to find out more about Cross Texas Transmission and their involvement in the transmission build out you can call their local office in Pampa, Texas, at (806) 669-3000.

Tom Edwards, a CPWEA board member from Motley County reassured the group during the meeting that wind energy development is not dead in our area and asked members to stay dedicated to the vision that CPWEA is working toward.

“I urge you to continue your membership and urge your friends to join because the war isn’t over yet,” Edwards said, reminding the members that the potential to utilize wind energy to help strengthen our communities is still there.

CPWEA is a non-profit landowner association working to connect landowners with developers in the wind industry. CPWEA’s goal is to recruit wind development to the region and help revitalize rural communities. Go to www.caprockplainswind.com to find out more about the association and find full presentations from recent CPWEA meetings.

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