

NPPD may purchase wind energy from Petersburg farm

World-Herald News Service

COLUMBUS — Nebraska Public Power District officials will negotiate with Midwest Wind Energy/Edison Mission Midwest to purchase power from a planned 80-megawatt wind farm near Petersburg.

NPPD directors authorized the negotiations at their meeting Friday, according to an NPPD press release.

District officials also are interested in an agreement for a second project by the same developer northeast of Broken Bow if other utilities agree to purchase up to half of the output of the total projects.

It's expected that final contracts will be approved later this year and the wind generation facilities will be operational by late 2010 or early 2011.

The proposal from Midwest Wind Energy/Edison Mission Midwest was selected based on the developers' ability to achieve the lowest possible cost for electricity, including transmission, and minimize any environmental concerns.

NPPD President Ron Asche said seeking power purchase agreements keeps the district on schedule to meet a strategic goal of adding more renewable energy to its portfolio.

The directors set a goal in February 2008 to

have 10 percent of NPPD's energy — 533 megawatts — come from renewable resources by 2020, primarily from wind.

NPPD currently owns and operates the Ainsworth Wind Energy Facility, where 36 turbines produce about 60 megawatts of electricity. About half of that electricity is purchased by Omaha Public Power District, Municipal Energy Agency of Nebraska, the city of Grand Island and the Jacksonville Electric Authority.

There also is an agreement with Edison Mission to purchase the 80-megawatt output from Elkhorn Ridge Wind Farm northwest of Bloomfield. NPPD purchases half; OPPD, Lincoln Electric System and Grand Island share the other half.

Proposals for the two new 80-megawatt projects near Broken Bow and Petersburg came at the request of NPPD in November 2008. Twenty-two were received in April from seven developers.

Midwest Wind Energy/Edison Mission Midwest plans to use the Community-Based Energy Development model for both of its projects, which qualifies them for state sales tax exemptions on wind-generation facility equipment and lowers costs for construction, operations and maintenance.