

Landowners sought for small-scale wind project

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Think it's windy where you live? Northwest Sustainable Energy for Economic Development (Northwest SEED), in partnership with the Last Mile Electric Co-op and the Northwest Cooperative Development Center, seeks electric customers with windy land to install demonstration wind turbines as part of a project called Our Wind Co-op.

Landowners interested in applying for the installation of small-scale wind turbines on their land may contact Northwest SEED for application forms. Selection criteria include: average wind speeds of at least 13.5 mph, electricity usage of at least 1500 kWh/month (approximately \$1200/year), and a commitment of potentially up to \$20,000-\$25,000 for equipment and installation costs.



Landowners who host wind turbines will become members of Our Wind Co-op, a unique, grassroots approach for meeting the Northwest's power needs through clean, homegrown electricity generation. Participating landowners will receive a significant discount on the cost of equipment and installation of a small-scale wind turbine. Without the assistance of Our Wind Co-op, similar installations would cost \$40,000-50,000.

At the reduced cost of \$20,000-\$25,000 in locations with a strong wind resource, a 10-12 year investment payback is possible. With regular maintenance, the lifetime of a turbine is approximately 20-30 years.

Other benefits to landowners include significantly reduced electricity bills, and a clean and secure energy supply. As part of the program, data will be collected and analyzed about performance of the turbines under a subcontract with the U.S. Department of Energy National Renewable Energy Laboratory. The turbines will come with an extended warranty and parts availability guarantee as well as installation and maintenance training.

Recently developed wind resource maps of the Pacific Northwest have identified local areas as some of the windiest in the region. The wind maps, developed by TrueWind Solutions using a modeling program, estimate the wind resource potential and highlight areas suitable for wind turbine installations. The maps are available in a searchable, interactive format on the web at www.windpowermaps.org and www.energyatlas.org. Analysis of the maps has shown that well-exposed sites across the state may have Class 3 wind resources adequate for Our Wind Co-op demonstration wind turbines. See the Windy Zip Code Map for windy areas in your county.

As a result of the windy forecast, Our Wind Co-op's first priority is to locate customers interested in participating in the small-scale wind Co-op. The initial goal is to install at least 10 small-scale wind turbines on farms, ranches, and rural facilities over the next year, proving that locally produced wind power is accessible and cost-effective. The first approved site is in Peshastin, a city in Chelan County, and nine additional windy sites for the turbines are still being sought.

Our Wind Co-op producers will generate electricity for home or farm use, as well as Green Tags, or certificates that represent the environmental benefits of clean energy generation. Co-op Green Tags will be sold to individuals or organizations that support homegrown clean energy, and want to offset the pollution of conventional energy sources. Co-op Green Tags sales will provide a significant revenue stream for the project, making small-scale wind turbines economically feasible. This is particularly important here in the Northwest where retail electricity costs are still well below the national average.

Northwest SEED supports and develops creative programs, policies, and financial strategies that help rural communities develop renewable energy sources to promote economic revitalization. The co-op was organized by NW SEED, Last Mile Electric Cooperative, the NW Cooperative Development Center, Climate Solutions and the Renewable Northwest Project with financial support from Bonneville Environmental Foundation and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Find out more about Our Wind Co-op and download an Application Form from the web site at www.nwseed.org/ourwind.asp.