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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oregon farmland sees development of a new crop: wind power

MILTON-FREEWATER, Ore. — Milton-Freewater Mayor Lewis Keys recalls when a “pie-in-the-sky” idea was pitched two years ago about building a wind farm on the town’s surrounding hills.

“Having been a farmer of wheat, barley and peas for 35 years, it was hard to imagine the surrounding land being used for anything other than farming, but now I can see the diversity of its uses,” Keys said.

On Aug. 6, 2003, the mayor looked on as a gathering of about 50 people congregated on a wind-swept ridge to break ground for the new, 41-megawatt Combine Hills Turbine Ranch I wind farm. It also was a celebration of a successful private/public collaboration to bring more renewable energy online.

The project came about because of an agreement between PacifiCorp, the Energy Trust of Oregon, Inc., and Eurus Energy America Corporation, which is building the facility. It is the first wind deal signed by the Energy Trust under the provisions of Oregon’s Electricity Restructuring Act (SB1149).

“Seeing this process go from concept to contract to concrete has been a thrill,” observed Rachel Shimshak, executive director of Renewable Northwest Project. RNP, which promotes renewable power development in the region, has been a key supporter of the Oregon Electricity Restructuring policy and the subsequent formation of the Energy Trust of Oregon. “We are proud of helping make this project a reality.”

Scheduled to be operational by the end of 2003, the new facility will interconnect to PacifiCorp’s transmission system and will be located west of Milton-Freewater, Ore., at the eastern end of Vansycle Ridge in Umatilla County.

“This project will have the capacity to generate enough wind energy to power 12,000 homes,” said Mitsuru Sakaki, president of Eurus Energy America. The initial construction phase calls for 41 megawatts (MW) with an option for another 63 MW to be added. Mr. Sakaki indicated his company’s interest in pursuing the development of the next phase of the project.

For the Energy Trust of Oregon, Combine Hills Turbine Ranch I is the first foray into large-scale wind development. Oregon’s Senate Bill 1149, passed in 1999, reserved 3 percent of PGE and PacifiCorp’s customers’ bills for investment in conservation and renewable resources. The purpose of the funds, which are administered by Energy Trust, is to promote conservation programs and development of renewable resources by buying down the above-market costs of the energy. This is the first commercial-scale project to benefit from the funds.

(more)

“Looking at the scale of this venture, we clearly have gone far beyond demonstration projects,” said Margie Harris, executive director of the Energy Trust of Oregon. “We think that this type of collaboration could be replicated in other states. We’re delivering power and benefits to the people in the Pacific Northwest.”

A critical component of the deal was PacifiCorp’s agreement to purchase the entire energy produced by the wind plant during a 20-year term. It will produce enough energy to power 11,890 average households. The utility currently purchases more than 70 MW of wind for its customers from two Wyoming wind farms. PacifiCorp operates as Pacific Power in Oregon, Washington, Wyoming and California; and as Utah Power in Utah and Idaho.

“This partnership should be the envy of and the model for other states that have established clean energy funds,” said Stan Watters, PacifiCorp’s senior vice president. “Our work together produced a fair and transparent process that sought the best value for our customers’ money.”

The turbines currently are being transported to the construction site. They will be 1 MW Mitsubishi MWT-1000A, with 55-meter towers and 61.4-meter rotors. This Oregon Project would be Eurus’ second wind project serving the Northwest. It was a partner in the 41.4 MW Foote Creek I project in Wyoming, which serves BPA, PacifiCorp and Eugene Water and Electric Board.

According to Mayor Keys, the new farm will provide a nice kick to the local economy. Because of its proximity to the PacifiCorp transmission line, area residents will receive wind power, and benefit from the infusion of construction dollars.

“I have enjoyed the view from the combine seat atop these rolling hills,” Keys said. “They are always magnificent and ever-changing. These new machines will be a wonderful addition for years to come.”

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Wind farm construction is underway



Construction is underway on the Combine Hills Turbine Ranch I wind farm just outside Milton-Freewater, Ore. The new 41-megawatt facility will be completed before year's end, and will connect with PacifiCorp's transmission system, supplying renewable power to nearly 12,000 Pacific Power and Utah Power customers. The project came about because of an agreement between PacifiCorp, the Energy Trust of Oregon, Inc., and Eurus Energy America Corporation. It is the first wind deal signed by the Energy Trust under the provisions instituted by Oregon's electricity restructuring (SB1149).