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Dakota Wind Energy announces state's first utility scale, community-owned wind project

Dakota Wind Energy, LLC, announced its plans today to take advantage of South Dakota's tremendous wind potential with the formation of the state's first utility scale community-owned wind project. The project is located in Roberts, Marshall, and Day counties. This project has the potential of ultimately producing over 750 megawatts of wind energy spread over 700 square miles of agricultural land. According to the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA), South Dakota ranks 4th in the nation with the greatest wind potential. However, when compared to other states, South Dakota's current installed wind power capacity is very low.

The Dakota Wind Energy LLC was originally conceived by South Dakota landowner, Gerry Fisher. National Wind, the project's manager, local landowners and community leaders have capitalized the company. Dakota Wind Energy, LLC has formed a members advisory board which includes nine of the South Dakota landowners/co-founders. These board members are, Donald Erickson, Dennis Fagerland, Gerry Fisher, Blair Healy, Tim Hofer, Walt Johnson, Bob Metz, Don Ogren, and Curt Sampson. Additional landowners and local community members will become owners as the project develops.

"For community-wind projects, such as Dakota Wind Energy, size does matter. Utilities and institutional investors prefer larger community-owned wind

projects because they have the local support needed to move smoothly through permitting, site control, and power line siting," says Patrick Pelstring, co-chair of National Wind. "This increases their likelihood of completion and gives projects such as Dakota Wind Energy, a competitive advantage. Large community wind projects also have the capital available to afford the high costs related to wind developments of any size, including building a private transmission lines, which can cost millions of dollars," says Pelstring.

South Dakota has the wind potential to power 50% of the nation's electrical demands. This project, when all phases are complete, could produce enough electricity to power more than 200,000 homes and displace almost 2,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually.

"As a South Dakota landowner, I wanted to institute a wind development program that provides my family with the best benefits," says Fisher. "After much research, I discovered that a community-wind development approach is a great option, offering landowners and their communities multiple ways to participate and own a significant share of a wind project's economic benefits. Landowners have the opportunity to become partners in the project, not simply 'lessees.' Everything about the project is openly communicated, so it is rewarding to see our neighbors work together and get involved."