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## **Westar announces contract for more wind power - using Siemens nacelles**

Westar Energy has contracted with a California company to construct a new 280-megawatt wind farm in Ford County, using Hutchinson-manufactured Siemens Wind nacelles.

Power from the \$400 million-plus Western Plains Wind Farm, a development by Infinity Wind Power of Santa Barbara, will bring Westar's renewable energy portfolio to more than 1,500 megawatts, according to the Kansas utility.

Westar also plans to pursue another 200 megawatts of wind energy, the company announced, with an option to own 50 percent of those additional megawatts.

"Both these projects come out of a recent request for proposals issued this past fall," said Westar Energy spokesperson Gina Penzig. "We don't have any other details to disclose at this point on the second project. We hope to have something by the end of the year."

The Western Plains project will be composed of 122 of Siemens' 2.3-megawatt nacelles and rotors manufactured at Siemens' Hutchinson plant, combined with 108-meter blades from the company's Iowa-based manufacturing facility.

The project, which Infinity will build and then turn over to Westar, is a piece of a larger land position Infinity has been developing in the area since 2008, said Matt Langley, director of business development with Infinity Wind. "It's Infinity's intention to develop additional land, but that area is not going with this transaction," Langley said.

Plans are to bring the project online at the end of 2016 or in early 2017, with construction starting in late spring or early summer, he said. "One of the things we're excited about is that the machines will come out of Hutchinson," Langley said. "This is really a Kansas project, which is great for jobs and economic development, but also for the economics of the project. We don't have to wait for boats to come from overseas. Having the facility providing turbines almost next to the project makes life easy."

Economic development from the project in Ford County will include land lease royalties paid to local landowners and payments to local and county government

of about \$75 million during the first 20 years of operation, a release from Westar noted.

Additionally, it will create more than 200 construction jobs, followed by about three dozen permanent jobs, and involving \$435 million in capital investment.

Congress' recent extension of the Production Tax Credit for wind is helping make the projects possible, Penzig said, "by bringing costs down where they're competitive with other generation sources."

"In today's power market, wind continues to represent a very affordable option for us, which allows us to provide energy to our customers at a lower cost," Mark Ruelle, Westar Energy president and chief executive officer, stated in a release. "Equally important for our state, wind energy creates Kansas jobs in construction, manufacturing and ongoing operations of the wind farms."

When the two projects come on line, about 57 percent of Westar's energy will be from non-carbon generating sources, Penzig said, including renewables and the Wolf Creek nuclear power plant.

Among Westar's existing wind sources is the 168 MW Ironwood Wind Farm near Spearville, which Infinity Wind developed but then sold to Duke Energy.

The company also sells 104 MW of power from its Shooting Star Wind Farm near Mullinville to Mid-Kansas Electric.

Besides Western Plains, the company's website indicates it has three other wind power projects under development in western Kansas, together projected to generate 1,500 MW of additional power.

"We still have an additional chunk of land which we're looking at for either exporting through Grain Belt Express (a high-voltage transmission line proposed to deliver energy to eastern states) or continuing to sell to Westar or other local energy company," Langley said. "We can go either way depending on demand. We have made a significant investment in Kansas. It's really a great place to develop."