



## **MEDA Wind Project Working Group**

**October 1, 2019**

**8:45am**

**On the call:** Steve Simonson, Jim Atchison, Gloria O'Rourke, Kathie Bailey, Elizabeth Patton, Sarah Converse, Billie Lee, Dan Lloyd, Tom Kaiserski, Jason Stuart, Tori Matejovsky, and Kirk Keysor.

**Purpose:** To have those working on Montana Wind Projects to share information and resources.

### **Who is missing?**

Steve asked if there are wind project representatives that should be on this call.

- Gloria is to share with Tribal representatives and invite them.
- Everyone is to Invite MACo representatives.

### **Resources:**

- Dan Lloyd has some slides to share; he made a presentation to County Commissioners.
- MT Wind Farm Tax info made available
- [South Peak](#) Wind Project under construction.
- Kathie Bailey is happy to share use of impact fees and project detail experience. It is important to engage county commissioners and wisely use impact funds.
- 2017 Session passed a bill; wind farms over 25 megawatts must provide a decommission plan within 6 months of operations; after 15 years they must post a bond with DEQ for reclamation. The 2019 session reduced the wattage.
- Lad Barney shared with Steve that USDA/RD has funding for small and intermediate projects.

### **Questions:**

- Do energy credits apply to solar projects? Tom explained solar projects do apply. The report Tom provided is being updated that tabulates property taxes paid by Montana utilities and will include solar.
- New and expanding industry tax abatement – Montana Code Title 15 Chapter 24 Part 14 – is for developers. It is up to County Commissioners to utilize it through MT Dept. of Revenue.
- Are commissioners willing to work together? For example, one county might have staging benefits, but no turbines built in the area. Jim Atchison feels this is possible and is taking place.

### **Projects:**

- Upper Bad Lands Wind Development - Dawson County Project – Jason reported. Last October developers and commissioners agreed on an impact fee amount. Environmental studies took place this past summer; 89 wind turbines will be constructed near Highway 200S. Ten to thirteen jobs will be created; construction begins next spring.
- McCone County has had a wind project in the works for ten years which began under Linda Twitchell. Environmental studies began a few years ago; not much more information is known at this time. Sage Grouse protection was an issue.
- Baker – Diamond Willow Project in Fallon County is in place. Beth Epley reported on interest in solar energy production in Fallon County as well and she is seeking resources.
- Sweet Grass County – turned down a project due to ruination of the pristine view.
- Two wind farm projects going in the Beartooth RC&D region. The Stillwater County project is owned by Pattern Energy Group 2 LP and generates 79 MW. The new wind farm is located in southern Carbon county and is owned by Pacific Source. A link to the project can be found at the Carbon county website: [CO.CARBON.MT.US](http://CO.CARBON.MT.US)

#### **Multi- County Projects:**

- Clear Water Windfarm has been proposed for six or seven years. It involves the Orion Group and have 200 – 300 towers. Rosebud, Custer and Garfield Counties are involved. Most attention lately has been on tax abatement issues within each county. Construction to begin next spring. Of concern: workforce availability. There are buyers for the energy produced; Miles City would be the staging area.

#### **Next Steps:**

- Gloria will compile a Wind Project Working Group website to post resources, meeting notes, and information.
- Next meeting topics: abatement fee documents, lessons learned, commissioner guest speakers.