

## DNRC to consider new wind farm leases

By KARL PUCKETT • Tribune Staff Writer • April 22, 2010

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation said Wednesday that it will consider leasing 26,932 acres of school trust land near Conrad, Cut Bank and Martinsdale to private developers interested in using the property as part of larger commercial wind farms.

The projects are:

- Southeast Cut Bank Wind Farm near Cut Bank in Glacier County. It involves 1,280 acres of school trust land;
- The Ethridge Wind Farm near Ethridge, in Toole County, where 1,280 acres would be leased;
- The Hay Lake Wind Farm near Cut Bank in Toole and Glacier counties. The project involves 4,904 acres of state land; and
- A project near Martinsdale that involves 19,462 acres of state land. It is proposed as a second phase of a wind farm in the works by Texas-based Horizon Wind Energy. When the DNRC puts out requests for proposals to lease school trust land for wind development, it typically is in response to inquiries from developers seeking to use state land as part of wind farms that involve adjacent private land, said Michael Sullivan, supervisor of the DNRC's Property Management Section.

NaturEner USA inquired about leasing land for the Ethridge and Southeast Cut Bank projects, he said.

That state land is located in the vicinity of the Glacier Wind Farm, a 210-megawatt wind farm on the border of Toole and Glacier counties. The Glacier Wind Farm is owned and operated by NaturEner.

NaturEner officials previously said the company is planning an \$800 million, 309-megawatt wind farm in the same area as the Glacier facility, but north of U.S. Highway 2. Invenergy Wind Development LLC, the owner of the Judith Gap Wind Farm in Wheatland County, inquired about leasing the land for the Hay Lake Wind Farm near Cut Bank, Sullivan said.

Invenergy officials said last week that they are planning to construct two new wind farms in northcentral Montana, including a project near Cut Bank.

The state is accepting development proposals until May 26.

The state charges a minimum of a one-time installation fee of \$2,500 a megawatt on state land. It also charges 3 percent of gross annual revenues, or \$3,000 for each megawatt, whichever is greater.

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