



## Wind energy project may be coming to three South Texas counties

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LAREDO, March 28—Rotating wind energy turbines may soon graze in three counties in South Texas as part of a \$2 billion project to bring an alternative source of energy to the region.

Eviva Spinnaker Energy and American Shoreline Inc., introduced the projects Thursday at a private reception in Laredo at Montecarlo reception hall. Representatives from both companies gave power point presentations with information outlining components of wind energy.

“We think it’s the right decision to bring wind to South Texas,” said Patrick Nye, vice president of American Shoreline. “We know that the market indicates that we do need wind and other sources of energy in South Texas. We need to have electricity supplements to help our demand for natural gas imported from across the ocean.”

If approved, the wind farm projects, Alta Mesa and Rio Vista, will be situated within Webb, Zapata and Jim Hogg counties. The projects are slated for construction in 2009 and are expected to be in full commercial operation by 2010.

The two primary benefits of wind energy outlined by Eviva Spinnaker and American Shoreline were economic and environmental.

The companies estimate generation of \$80 million in property taxes for schools and counties, \$300 million in landowner royalties, and \$400 million in contractors for construction and permanent jobs. Job creation statistics indicate the wind farm project will generate 350 jobs during construction and 30-plus full-time, high-skilled and high-wage jobs through project lifetime.

On the environmental side, presenters pointed out that wind energy has zero greenhouse gas emissions, over 1.4 million tons avoided per year. Wind farm projects require no water consumption, produce a renewable source of energy, and thus, supporters say, create long-term electricity price stability. Overall the project is expected to provide power supply for 220,000 homes annually.

The companies are in the process of conducting avian studies, since one of the potential environmental impacts consists of possible bird and bat collisions with wind farm turbines. Another potential environmental impact is erosion. However, experts say it can be prevented via the proper installation of equipment.

Still at the initial stages of the project, Eviva Spinnaker and American Shoreline must obtain permits from several agencies to continue, including those in the federal government.

“This is not going to work unless we get Homeland Security to say yes,” said U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Laredo, adding that DHS initially rejected the project because of border security concerns. “We want to have border security, but don’t impede trade, don’t impede commerce, and in this case, don’t impede economic development.”

Cuellar, who is advocating for the wind farm project at the federal level, said that DHS has recently accepted the possibility of giving the green light for the project. He said DHS has identified the problems and are willing to come up with solutions. One of Homeland Security’s biggest concern was the effect wind turbines would have on radar installations used to detect smugglers on the border.



Doug Wert, CEO of Eviva Spinnaker

“Border security comes into play and this is something that we'll balance out,” said Cuellar. The congressman said he is confident DHS will grant the permit, as will the other federal agencies who must give the go-ahead to continue, including the Defense Department and the Federal Aviation Administration.

The presentation in Laredo was the first step of the information process, according to Spinnaker CEO Doug Wert. The company plans to open an information center for the public as part of a community outreach and input venue.

“We have been through our partners, AmShore, interfacing with the local communities and talking to people continuously to determine whether they will support or if there's any opposition. So far, we've had zero opposition and we're encouraged by that,” said Wert, adding that the project in South Texas is one of the best opportunities the companies have seen.

“We've talked about issues like counties, schools and avian issues,” said Wert. “Everybody that we've talked to has dealt with us properly and professionally, asked good questions and tried to become informed.”

The proposed wind energy project in South Texas is comprised of partnerships between Eviva Spinnaker, American Shoreline, South Texas landowners, the North American Development Bank, which has offered to provide funding, and government officials.

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