



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 10, 2004

news

CONTACTS:

Cheryle Jackson	312/814.3158 (office)
Abby Ottenhoff	312/814.3158 (office)
Rebecca Rausch	217/782.7355 (office)
Andrew Ross	312/636.1747 (Opp. Returns)

GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES \$250,000 OPPORTUNITY RETURNS GRANT TO FUND WIND TURBINE IN PIKE COUNTY THAT BREAKS GROUND TODAY

SPRINGFIELD – As part of a comprehensive *Opportunity Returns* plan to invest in renewable energy in the West Central region, Governor Rod Blagojevich today announced that groundbreaking on a major wind turbine in Pike County starts today at 1:00pm two miles west of Pittsfield. Through its Renewable Energy Resource Program, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is providing the Illinois Rural Electric Cooperative with **\$250,000** in grant funding to support the wind turbine project.

“The West Central region’s strong agriculture base offers many opportunities for economic growth, and this new wind turbine is a great example of that. Wind is a clean, proven, cost-competitive, source of energy that more and more producers and consumers are turning to for power. Through this *Opportunity Returns* grant, we are making an emerging market even more viable, while stimulating economic growth for thousands of farmers across the region,” Governor Blagojevich said.

Wind turbines bring a new income stream for farmers and provide valuable property tax benefits to local governments. Illinois Rural Electric Cooperative in Pike County, consisting of approximately 7,800 members, will begin constructing a 1.65 megawatt wind turbine. This large wind generator with 135-foot blades will be installed on a 260-foot steel tower and is expected to produce 4.35 million kilowatts of electricity per year, which is as much electricity as would be consumed by 400-500 typical homes on an annual basis.

“This wind turbine in Pike County represents the first modern wind turbine for the West Central region and will further diversify the local economy and workforce. Initiatives such as this one are truly the product of a focused, regional approach to economic development. The Governor is continuing to find innovative ways to expand economic opportunity across this region,” said State Senator Designee Deanna Demuzio (Carlinville).

“This grant from our Renewable Energy Resource Program to fund this wind turbine is a savvy economic investment with a tremendous environmental upside. By supporting an alternative fuel that Illinois has great capacity to produce, we’re not only diversifying our energy portfolio and reducing our reliance on conventional sources of production, but strengthening a dynamic new market that has real potential to fuel significant economic growth in rural areas throughout the West Central region and beyond,” said DCEO Director Jack Lavin.

(more)

The wind turbine is being built by Vestas, the world's leading supplier of wind turbines and provider of 45% of the installed wind power capacity worldwide from 2002 to 2003. A crew of up to 25 will install the turbine, and construction should take six to eight months. Once it is operational, several people in the co-op's 24-hour dispatch center will monitor it.

The total cost of the wind turbine project is estimated to be about \$1.85 million. The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Illinois Clean Energy Foundation are also providing grant support making this project financially viable.

Governor Blagojevich's *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development plan is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois' history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn't work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – finding areas with common economic strengths and needs, and developing a plan with specific actions for each region. This grassroots effort is a product of significant outreach over several months throughout each region, with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. The 45 specific projects that the Governor announced in January for the West Central region are designed to be flexible and effective. Each plan is tailored to deliver real results that local businesses will see, feel, and, hopefully, profit from.

#####