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NEWS

Nearby residents, government officials and utility representatives endorse ALLETE Clean Energy's Thunder Spirit wind farm

HETTINGER, N.D. – Community members curious about the Thunder Spirit wind farm joined government representatives, utility executives and contractors today to literally “sign on” to the 107-megawatt renewable energy project now under construction by ALLETE Clean Energy (ACE).

ACE, a wholly-owned subsidiary of ALLETE, Inc. (NYSE:ALE), is in the midst of building Thunder Spirit, located about 100 miles southwest of Bismarck in Adams County. When it's completed, the wind farm and its energy output -- enough to power about 30,000 homes -- will be sold to Montana-Dakota Utilities (MDU).

At the conclusion of a short program near the first erected wind turbines, guests wrote their signatures on one of the 160-foot fiberglass wind blades that will soon be turning steady North Dakota breezes into electricity for MDU electric customers.

Eric Norberg, president of ALLETE Clean Energy since its inception in 2011, was on hand to thank Wanzek Construction, Thunder Spirit's prime contractor, and welcome representatives of Nordex, the German wind equipment manufacturer. He also introduced Nicole Kivisto, president and CEO of Montana-Dakota Utilities and other MDU officials, North Dakota Lt. Governor Drew Wrigley, governmental representatives of Adams County, and North Dakota Tax Commissioner Ryan Rauschenberger.

“This is the first project our company has developed and built from the ground up, and I'm delighted at the outstanding cooperation we've received,” Norberg said. “Thunder Spirit is a tremendous wind energy resource in our energy rich state. We'd like to thank Montana-Dakota Utilities and area leaseholders for their close partnership and appreciate the support of Hettinger residents and our parent company, ALLETE.”

“This event is a great milestone in the progress of this generation project. Our partnership with ACE has been wonderful and we look forward to providing electricity to our customers from this site for many years to come,” said Nicole Kivisto, president and CEO of Montana-Dakota Utilities. “Wind Works Power Corp. was the original developer of the Thunder Spirit wind project and we appreciate their efforts to develop this project. This wind resource will not only provide needed generation for our growing customer base, but it also further diversifies our generation portfolio by increasing our renewable segment to 20 percent.”

ACE operates wind generation facilities in Minnesota, Iowa, Oregon and Pennsylvania. ACE was established in 2011 to acquire or develop capital projects to create energy solutions by way of wind, solar, biomass, hydro, natural gas, shale resources, clean coal technology and other emerging energy innovations.

“In industry travels across the country I have often expressed that North Dakota is energy-rich and policy friendly,” Al Hodnik, CEO of ALLETE said at today’s event. “North Dakota is an energy powerhouse because it has actively encouraged and developed all of its wind, gas, coal and oil energy resources in balance and in harmony with its agricultural roots. Given ALLETE’s long standing linkage to North Dakota and energy of all forms, we look forward to developing additional creative energy solutions while answering our nation’s call to transform its energy landscape.”

Lt. Gov. Drew Wrigley saluted ALLETE Clean Energy for developing and constructing Thunder Spirit and then selling the project to Montana-Dakota Utilities, a division of MDU Resources Group.

“The completion of the Thunder Spirit wind farm marks another important milestone in North Dakota’s “all of the above” energy production journey. This wind farm will have the capacity to generate 107 megawatts of electricity for Hettinger and its surrounding areas,” Wrigley said. “I applaud ALLETE Clean Energy and Montana Dakota Utilities for their investment.”

U.S. Rep. Kevin Cramer, who serves on the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, which has the broadest jurisdiction of any committee in Congress, also attended the event. And both of North Dakota’s U.S. Senators, Heidi Heitkamp and John Hoeven, sent along messages of support for Thunder Spirit read by aides Shirley Meyer and Jon Cameron, respectively. Federal policy has been instrumental in promoting the nation’s wind resources.

When completed this December, Thunder Spirit will consist of 43 Nordex N100 wind turbines, which were shipped from Europe via the Saint Lawrence Seaway into the port of Duluth, Minn. and then trucked to the construction site.

About 17 miles of new roads have been built, and 25 miles of underground cable will be used to collect power for transmission at a substation. More than 200 contract employees are now at work across the 10,000 acres of land included within the wind farm’s perimeter. Thunder Spirit’s location allows Montana-Dakota to connect the project to its transmission system in an area where the company already provides electric service, further enhancing MDU’s deliverability of power to its customers. Wind Works Power Corp. was the original developer of the Thunder Spirit Wind project.

ALLETE, Inc. is an energy company headquartered in Duluth, Minnesota. In addition to its electric utilities, Minnesota Power and Superior Water, Light and Power of Wisconsin, ALLETE owns ALLETE Clean Energy, based in Duluth, Minnesota, BNI Coal in Center, North Dakota, U.S. Water Services in St. Michael, Minnesota, and has an eight percent equity interest in the American Transmission Co. More information about ALLETE is available at www.allete.com.

The statements contained in this release and statements that ALLETE may make orally in connection with this release that are not historical facts, are forward-looking statements. These forward-looking statements involve risks and uncertainties and investors are directed to the risks discussed in documents filed by ALLETE with the Securities and Exchange Commission.