

# Mid-Iowa News

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## Iowa helping wind entrepreneurs to get up, running

By Bob Zientara , Staff Writer

Winds of change are blowing through Mid-Iowa, and area residents need look no further than the 100-tower Story Wind project for proof.

But along with the mega-facilities, there's also a growing collection of smaller wind energy operations built and operated by local entrepreneurs.

"Iowa is simply a hotbed of wind energy activity," said Amy Swenson, communications specialist for the Iowa Energy Center, an independent agency administered by Iowa State University.

"When (oil entrepreneur) T. Boone Pickens comes here to talk to us about his plans (for wind and natural gas), he's preaching to the choir," Swenson said.

### Iowa legislates for wind

The center has posted several case studies on the Energy Center Web site that show the success of wind power on the entrepreneurial level as well as that of larger investors.

"In Jefferson, there's an outfit called the Hardin Hilltop, with seven turbines," she said. "That represents the investment of seven farmers."

Bill Haman, who oversees a wind energy revolving loan fund at the center, said recent legislative action has assured a continued opportunity for Iowa entrepreneurs who are willing to take the risk.

"The (Iowa General Assembly) re-enacted the wind turbine tax credit last year," Haman said. "It was \$80 million when the first version was approved in 2005 and roughly \$90 million in 2006. Then, it vanished in 2007, but it's back now."

Also available are USDA grants that, with state tax credits, permit the construction of locally owned and operated wind farms.

This year, the Legislature agreed to allow tax credits to be sold to third parties on one or more occasions. The credits are based on the number of kilowatt hours generated by a wind facility.

The credits allow smaller investors to better their cash flow and make cost amortization a bit easier on their



By Ronnie Miller/The Tribune

A crane helps to set the first section of a wind turbine tower into place Wednesday, Aug. 13, at the Story Wind construction site south of Zearing.

budgets, Haman said.

Specific tax credit information is available from the Iowa Utility Board at:  
[www.state.ia.us/government/com/util/energy/renewable\\_tax\\_credits.html](http://www.state.ia.us/government/com/util/energy/renewable_tax_credits.html)

There are more incentives available from the USDA, but applicants may need some help picking them out of the massive, 2008 Farm Bill recently approved by Congress, he said.

### **Powering schools and farms**

According to Haman and Swenson, recent Iowa projects that are a direct result of the tax credit and/or the revolving loan fund include:

- \* The Hardin Hills development north of Jefferson.

"This program got off the ground thanks to the help of a consultant named Tom Wind," Haman said. "And no, he didn't change his name."

- \* The 10-turbine Crosswinds project at Ruthven, coordinated by Phil Sundblad, Albert City.

- \* A single, \$800,000 turbine at Eldora-New Providence High School is financed with a \$550,000 loan and an additional \$250,000 from the revolving loan fund. In 2006, the unit generated 1.3 million kilowatt hours, of which the school used 1.12 million.

Due to the sales of surplus power, the unit is expected to pay for itself by 2012.

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### **Wind on the Web**

- \* Go to: [www.energy.iastate.edu/Renewable/wind](http://www.energy.iastate.edu/Renewable/wind).

- \* Case studies and projects.

- \* Monthly wind patterns listed are coded in color on Iowa map.

- \* Wind turbine output calculators (amount of electricity a turbine may be expected to generate) for all Iowa counties and hundreds of communities.

- \* A "wind energy manual," listing the kinds of systems that work best in Iowa, a history of wind power, economic and social issues and how to decide whether to invest/build.

- \* State and national statistics: [www.awea.org/projects/projects](http://www.awea.org/projects/projects).

Source: Iowa Energy Center