

## Alliance vows to fight power line, wind farm projects here: Willox: County lacks zoning regs needed to help landowner battle

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About 200 concerned citizens flocked to Douglas May 7 for the first meeting of the Northern Laramie Range Alliance, an organization of landowners and citizens bent on stopping the development of wind turbines and the construction of a segment of Rocky Mountain Power's proposed Gateway West Transmission Line in the northern Laramie Mountains.

"The main objective of the (Northern Laramie Range Alliance) is that we want to successfully oppose both of these things," Kenneth Lay, one of the alliance's founding members, explained. "For anybody who's in favor of them, this probably isn't your group."

The Laramie Range Alliance began to take shape when Lay joined with fellow landowners Diemer True and Tom Swanson following a public meeting held in Glenrock to discuss RMP's proposed Gateway West Transmission Line. The alliance later broadened its mission when Utah-based Wasatch Wind started showing interest in leasing large amounts of land in the area for a wind farm. The organization has grown in size ever since and the alliance's organizers have been "carrying the costs" of its operations, according to Lay.

Despite the alliance's objectives, the meeting's audience included several landowners who have reportedly been negotiating with Wasatch Wind. Landowners negotiating with Wasatch Wind have been hesitant to speak publicly about the issue, but Wasatch Wind representative Lin Alder assured that landowners have not been pressured to keep quiet and that any silence stems from the sensitivities typical of business negotiations.

Neither RMP nor Wasatch Wind attended the meeting. Representatives from both companies said they had not been invited but that both would have likely attended had they received an invitation.

"We're looking forward to the dialogue, but we're not going to go where we're not invited," Alder said.

The meeting also brought up a number of issues surrounding the ability of Converse County and Wyoming to deal with large-scale energy developments.

"The case law and statutes gives counties the ability to control industrial development, but, except in extremely rare circumstances, it is through the land use and the zoning that the state allows counties to implement that," County Commissioner Jim Willox explained. "We currently in Converse County, have no zoning or permitting process for wind farms or transmission lines."

Converse County Commissioners have been working on mechanisms to permit and regulate large scale energy developments since about the beginning of the year, he said.

State Sen. Jim Anderson (R-Glenrock) has also been named to a Joint Judiciary Committee that will explore the ramifications of increased wind power development in Wyoming.

The Northern Laramie Range Alliance has raised a host of concerns about both Wasatch Wind and RMP's proposed projects ranging from aesthetic issues to historic preservation and wildlife conservation problems. The group has considered offering conservation leases to landowners who might otherwise consider leasing their property to Wasatch Wind, organizers said.

"It's good to have a nice meeting, but you've gotta' follow through," True said. "You've gotta' take some action."