

Who gets how much? Counties, towns divide power plant impact fees

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Reporter

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For the second time this year, area counties and municipalities have worked out a formula to divvy up impact monies from PacifiCorp projects near Glenrock. This time the project being discussed is the planned upgrades to Dave Johnston Power Plant.

PacifiCorp will do major emissions control work as well as maintenance overhauls in two of the plant's four units beginning at the end of this year and lasting through 2010. The project could bring 450 workers to the area.

The amount of money available was unknown during the meeting because the Industrial Siting Council figures the payments based on estimated sales tax increases during the projects. As of Tuesday, the ISC projections were still unknown by the Converse County commissioners.

Whatever the final amount, Glenrock will take away 45 percent of the total, the same percentage the town received several months ago when the same entities divided impact fees for the two planned 79-turbine wind farms.

This time around however, Natrona County wrestled away 25 percent of the pot, leaving Converse County's four entities to settle on the remaining three-quarters.

From the remainder, the city of Douglas will land 20 percent, about 15 percent of the total. Last time, the Jackalope City took less than two percent.

Converse County took 18 percent, about 13 percent of total, and Rolling Hills took less than one percent of the total. Glenrock landed 60 percent of the remainder.

"Had it gone to staff review I believe Glenrock would have received more and Natrona County would have taken less," CANDO Executive Director Joe Coyne said.

The possibility of letting the ISC decide the allocations almost came to be when the city of Casper and Converse County representatives couldn't see eye to eye on the split.

Last time, 85 percent of the impact fees were awarded to Converse County entities, which left the three Natrona County entities – Casper, Evansville and the county – to divide the remaining 15 percent.

Following that impact meeting, PacifiCorp then announced many, if not all, of their workers would be staying in Casper while they worked on the wind farm project.

"We're going on the assumption that 15 percent was right in the first case," Casper City Manager Tom Forslund said. "It wasn't."

Forslund, the lone representative from the three Natrona County entities, agreed on the split between the two counties in the end.

"We'll accept it for the sake of good relations," he said. "But it's not right."

PacifiCorp will hold a scoping meeting at 6 p.m. April 17 at Glenrock Town Hall to discuss the project and answer any questions the public may have.