

Forum focuses on harnessing Wyoming's wind

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Published: Monday, March 3, 2008 12:16 PM MST

Wind-swept Wyoming could be one of the some productive and profitable places in the country to harness the energy of the wind — if the problem of getting enough transmission lines to carry it can be solved.

"Tapping into Wyoming wind energy makes sense," said Ray Werner, a managing partner with the Douglas-based energy consulting firm, Werner Solutions. "There is a huge market for wind right now in places like Arizona and Southern Nevada and Southern California, especially with the emphasis on clean energy and the opposition to coal-fueled energy."

"To me, it's like being a good engineer — it's neat, it's cool, and there are a lot of opportunities out there that are not being approached," Werner said. "But we get stymied here in Wyoming because most lines are already fully loaded and can't carry any more current."

Werner will be one of the guest speakers at a forum Thursday night targeting Wyoming's wind as an energy source. The forum will be at the P&H Mine Pro building and is sponsored by the Campbell County Economic Development Corp.

The other keynote speaker at the forum will be Roy Douglas, the technical manager for Carbone of America, a New Jersey-based firm that has been involved in the international wind energy market for two decades. Carbone is expanding its operations into the United States. Douglas is also Carbone's representative for the power generation and mining markets in North American.

Werner is also a newly elected Converse County commissioner and is the community outreach coordinator for the state's federally funded Wind Powering America and Geopowering the West programs,. He said he spent most of his life in the mining industry as an engineer, and just started his own business a year ago.

It's his job to work on the power transmission problem so that more landowners can take advantage of Wyoming's resources in a fiscally and environmentally sensitive manner, he said.

"What we have is a situation where you might have a landowner with plenty of wind power potential, and they say 'Why can't I just put a line out to that power pole over there?' and I have to tell them it's already full. That's the bottleneck we're dealing with," he said.

CCEDC Executive Director Ruth Benson said that the forum is just the first of many that the corporation will be putting on over the next year.

"This is one of the ways we are involving our investors and additional people ... in topics that are important to our investors and the community," she said Friday. "There will be lots of opportunity for people to ask questions and comment and time for people to do their own thing. It won't just be a lecture time, there will be interaction in the group."

If you go ...

- WHAT: "Harnessing Wyoming's Wind: An Energy Resource for the Future"
- WHEN: 5 to 6:30 p.m. Thursday
- WHERE: P&H MinePro Services building at 5834 S. Winland Drive in Gillette.
- FOR DETAILS: Contact CCEDC at 686-2603 or at www.ccedc@vcn.com