

# Harnessing Wyoming's plentiful wind

Governor, state officials to discuss wind energy development at UW conference

By Aaron LeClair  
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Gov. Dave Freudenthal will meet with wind industry representatives and civic leaders in Laramie this week to examine the complex issues surrounding wind energy development in Wyoming.

The conference, the Wyoming Wind Symposium, is open to the public and scheduled to take place Thursday and Friday in the Yellowstone Ballroom of the University of Wyoming's Student Union.

In a press release issued July 17, Freudenthal said the conference would cover important issues facing Wyoming, including the economic, physical and cultural impacts of wind energy development.

"As this boom in wind development unfolds in Wyoming, our state is balanced on the 'razor's edge' with respect to sage grouse and other sensitive wildlife species and our economic sustainability and private property rights," he said. "I encourage the public and state and local leaders to engage in this important discussion."

Among the topics to be examined in-depth are the implications of federal policy, project siting and development strategy, transmission development and the impacts on Wyoming's natural resources including its land and water, wildlife and cultural and historic sites.

Freudenthal will kick-off the conference at 8 a.m. on Thursday with "What's in it for Wyoming: Wind Energy Development in Our Backyard — The Consequences of the Choices We Make."

The keynote address will cover the broader issues posed by wind development and transmission infrastructure.

At 9:20 a.m., Mark Stacy of Iberdrola Renewables will lead those who attend the conference through a virtual tour of building a wind farm from the acquisition of permits to the erection of the final wind turbine.

After a short break, Ryan Lance, Freudenthal's deputy chief of staff, and Aaron Clark, the governor's energy infrastructure advisor, will present "My Backyard or Yours? Where Are the Turbines Set To Go?" at 10:20 a.m.

Lance said the talk will be a broad overview of Wyoming's wind resources and where projects might be targeted and are currently being development.

"It is really aimed at everyone at the conference," he said. "It will paint a pretty clear picture of where wind development might occur."

Later, at 10:45 a.m., Lance will moderate a discussion about the economic impacts of wind energy projects in "What's in it for Wyoming — Impacts to Wyoming Revenues."

The discussion will provide a "county government" perspective from Converse County Commissioner Ed Werner, in addition to a legislative update from Sen. Jim Anderson, R-Glenrock, and the Wyoming Legislative Task Force on Wind Energy.

Three discussions at 2:30, 3:45 and 6 p.m. might be of interest for those who are concerned about wind energy projects and their impact on wildlife and open spaces.

The first, "Wind Energy Development in Wyoming and its Impact of Wyoming's Open Spaces and Cultural Resources," will feature discussions about cultural resources, the legal and regulatory framework and visual resources affected by wind energy projects.

The second discussion — "The Great Unknown: How will Wildlife React?" — will include presentations from the Wyoming Sage Grouse Implementation Team, Wyoming Game and Fish, Bureau of Land Management, wind energy industry representatives, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Audubon Wyoming.

"Sage Grouse — What's Next?" is the third and final discussion on Thursday. It will examine in-depth the impact of wind energy development on sage grouse with a presentation by Tom Blickensderfer, policy analyst and endangered species coordinator for Freudenthal.

On Friday, the conference will continue with discussions focused on the economics of wind energy development.

"The Economics Behind the Development of a Wind Farm" at 8 a.m. will include a discussion about wind cooperatives and private land.

"The Hoops and the Holes: The Current Wind Energy Regulatory Processes" will take place at 9:30 a.m. and focus on the Wyoming Industrial Citing and Development Act, Public Service Commission jurisdiction, the BLM's regulatory process and county zoning requirements.

The future of Wyoming will be examined in the final discussion of the conference at 10:45 a.m. in "What Will Wyoming's Wind Economy Look Like in 20 Years?"

The Wyoming Wind Symposium is scheduled to conclude at 12:30 p.m. on Friday.

Tim Sullivan, chairman of the Albany County Board of Commissioners, said he would attend the conference and hopes to learn more about the potential impacts wind energy projects could have on the local economy, environment and wildlife.

In addition, he said he hopes to hear more about the state's efforts to protect open spaces and how other counties have regulated wind energy development projects.

"Wind energy development is very important to Albany County, but it needs to be developed on our terms. Each wind farm probably has a 50-year life cycle," Sullivan said. "The questions are: Do we want new transmission lines criss-crossing the county and a wind farm on every ridge line? Probably not, so it is important we control what happens in Albany County."

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