

# Proposed wind farm draws criticism



BLM FIELD MANAGER Lance Porter addresses the crowd at a public hearing on a proposed wind farm project in Sweetwater County. Star photo by Jack H. Smith

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At a meeting Tuesday, Sweetwater County Commissioner Randy Walker may very well have echoed the feelings many local residents have about Teton Winds, LLC, proposed wind farm on White Mountain.

"I don't think most people are against wind farms in general," Walker said. "It's just where this one is proposed. It's location, location, location."

The commission meeting Tuesday, as well as a BLM public hearing last week served as a chance for residents and local leaders to discuss the proposed wind farm.

The BLM conducted two public meetings last Wednesday to discuss the findings of a recent Environmental Assessment done on Teton Wind's proposed wind farm and to also receive questions and comments from the public.

Although the EA has been completed, BLM Field Manager Lance Porter informed the crowd no decision has been made.

Teton Wind originally approached the BLM in 2008 with an application for a right-of-way for wind farm development.

Teton Wind Owner and President of Tasco Engineering Gary Tassanier was on hand at the meetings and discussed the idea of putting turbines on White Mountain.

"We leased the land where the wind was the best wind. That's why it is where it is," Tassanier told the crowd.

He explained the winds right at the edge of White Mountain offer the most efficient production.

Originally Tassanier said he had plans for 237 turbines, but because of new spacing guidelines the number would be between 185 to 200.

After hearing a few negative comments, Tassanier said he can't change peoples minds about his proposed project.

"People who love this idea, love it, and people who hate it are going to go on hating it," he said.

Sweetwater County resident Joe DeCora was one of those in attendance not in favor of the project.

"There are four proposed wind projects. That is to much for Sweetwater County," local resident Joe DeCora said. "I think Sweetwater County has done enough to supply energy for Southern California and everywhere else."

Although many residents spoke out against the proposed location, there was also a good number in attendance in favor of the current project.

"This is a wonderful idea," Rock Springs resident Clay Devine said. "We've got to do something for the future."

#### COMMISSION THOUGHTS

In a letter sent to Porter late last month, the Sweetwater County Commissioners were firmly opposed to turbines being placed on top of White Mountain.

"The Board believes that the view of Pilot Butte from the top of White Mountain and from other vantage points in Sweetwater County is an essential view shed that should remain obstructed," the letter states. "Also, it is the position of the Board that the view of the rim of White Mountain from the City of Rock Springs and all surrounding unincorporated residentially zoned areas including Reliance, Clearview Acres, Mountaineer and Stassinos Ranch should remain clear of all wind turbines and facilities.

The Commission denied Teton Wind's application for a conditional use permit Nov. 17, 2009.

Teton Wind may reapply for an additional use permit on or after Nov. 17 of this year.

The letter thanks the BLM for recognition of the Sweetwater County permitting process and the requirement that all county permits and authorizations must be obtained prior to the authorization of a BLM right-of-way for the White Mountain Wind Energy project.