

Wind Turbines Going Up East of Ellensburg

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The Kittitas Valley's latest wind farm is sprouting into the sky east of Ellensburg.

The first section of turbine tower went up the week of April 5 at the Vantage Wind Power Project site, and the first tower was topped with a completed turbine assembly on April 16.

"We're moving right along, right on schedule," said Kelly Meyer, project development manager for Invenergy Wind North America LLC, last week.

Currently, nearly 20 individual turbine sites, out of more than 60 at the wind farm, have sections going up or completed.

Meyer said the construction crews at the site likely will reach about 200 workers in the next few weeks. Completion and first operation of the wind farm is expected to be in October or early November.

All foundations have been dug, and the pouring of the final cement foundations is likely in the next few weeks.

As the foundations are completed, cured and inspected, the tower sections are put in place with a huge crane.

When completed, the wind farm's power will be sold to Pacific Gas & Electric. Six to eight full-time employees are expected to later operate the wind farm.

More on the way

The Vantage wind farm is one of three under way in the Kittitas Valley by international wind-power development firms.

An update on the others:

The Kittitas Valley Wind Power Project, by Horizon Wind Energy, plans a 48-turbine wind farm 12 miles northwest of Ellensburg on ridge tops on both sides of U.S. Highway 97.

Road building began last fall and resumed in early April. Turbine tower foundation digging likely will begin in the second or third week of May.

Work and investments are estimated at \$250 million to \$300 million for the project. The goal is to complete the project by late fall 2010 or earlier.

The Desert Claim Wind Power Project, with 95 turbines, is planned by the enXco Corp. eight miles northwest of Ellensburg north of Smithson Road.

Estimated total project costs are \$330 million. Groundbreaking, construction of roads and other site preparation are set to start sometime this summer.

A number of construction and other plans required by the state are being developed by the firm.