

Osage County Wind Development Sale Raises Concerns

Written by Australian Business

PAWHUSKA, Okla., Sept. 19, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- Wind Capital Group has announced it is selling its controversial Osage County Wind development project to TradeWind Energy and its foreign parent company, raising additional questions about the future of the proposed project. The sale raises serious concerns as to whether the new owners will attempt to move forward before required federal environmental and cultural studies are completed.

The project is strongly opposed by the Osage Nation and animal protection groups because of the threat large scale wind development poses to golden eagle and bald eagle populations, as well as the irreparable damage construction will cause sensitive cultural sites in the area.

"This sale in no way changes our opposition to wind farm development in Osage County," explained Assistant Chief Scott BigHorse

. "We see this as Wind Capital selling off the project to a foreign company with even less awareness, understanding and concern for the preservation of our Nation's sacred bird and historical sites in the area. We haven't been contacted by or even spoken to the new owner, which is very troubling."

Based upon filings with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), Wind Capital is seeking an expedited review and approval of the sale. "The fact they're trying to fast track this sale through the FERC approval process does not bode well for the need for Wind Capital or TradeWind to carefully review and study the impacts of the proposed wind project. I'm simply not optimistic they're going to do the right thing here and follow the law," said the assistant chief.

Recent statements by the parent company of Wind Capital in its annual report indicate concerns about the "continued uncertain regulatory and financing environment" surrounding the Osage project. Assistant Chief Bighorse views this as especially true regarding the Osage Wind project. "No one should view this project as a done-deal," explained BigHorse. "There are still multiple federal approvals the developer, whomever it may ultimately be, must obtain. These federal reviews and approvals are meant to protect the eagles that fly over our lands and our cultural heritage. The Osage Nation will do whatever it takes to ensure our resources are protected."

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TradeWind Energy is an affiliate of Enel North America (EGP-NA) part of the Enel Group, a multinational conglomerate based in Italy and one of the most aggressive wind development companies in the world. EGP-NA has a publicly stated goal of doubling its total installed capacity within the next few years. "This foreign company shouldn't be allowed to achieve its goals at the expense of the Osage Nation's sacred resources," BigHorse said.

"The Osage Nation is not opposed to renewable energy and in fact has plans to utilize renewables at our tribal headquarters," continued BigHorse. "The dispute is over placing these large scale wind development projects at inappropriate locations, ones that will harm eagle populations and could decimate significant archeological sites."

"The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) assessment of the area also hasn't been completed and released," said BigHorse. "We believe these companies are already building infrastructures for the project before those federally required studies are completed. Once ground is broken and construction begins, you can't take back the damage."

SOURCE Osage Nation