

Data collection key for wind project

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DAILY NEWS

Upon submission of an environmental assessment at the end of August, the Bear Mountain Wind project will be one step closer to its construction phase.

Bear Mountain Wind, a limited partnership between Aeolis Wind Power Corporation, Peace Energy Cooperative and Alberta-based AltaGas, is wrapping up the environmental assessment process it began in September 2005.

The \$250-million environmental assessment included wildlife, avian and bat studies, in addition to geotechnical and transmission studies to deter-

mine the best layout for construction of 60 two-megawatt wind turbines high atop the mountain. Developers hope to reconcile a plethora of permits, approvals and assessments to begin construction on the \$240 million project in 2007.

As soon as a month from now, Bear Mountain Wind may learn whether or not their bid to make the project part of BC Hydro's 2006 Open Call for Power was successful. The project is among 53 others vying to cash in on the crown corporation's thirst for electricity. Right now, Bear Mountain Wind appears to be breezing past other turbine-oriented bidders, as it is the only wind generation company that has secured an agreement with a manufacturer.

"I think we have an excellent project," said TJ Schur, vice-president of project development for Bear Mountain Wind. "I think we have a great opportunity to demonstrate what a good development can be in terms of its process and in terms of the final product."

Schur said the company's focus over the next few months will be to collect all of the data for the environmental assessment; make that information available to the public; and finalize various aspects of the application process. Archaeological digs are also being conducted on the site with the help of local First Nations people.

Bear Mountain Wind will be holding its next public consultation meeting

in late August or early September. If all goes as planned, towering wind turbines will arrive on the mountain in 2008, with construction slated to be completed in 2008-2009.

In keeping with its commitment to consult with the community throughout the process, the company recently met with Bear Mountain cattle grazers to devise a plan to ensure the pastureland in the area remains safe during construction.

"We want it to be a site that Dawson Creek and the area can be proud of," said Schur. "It's a region that is dominated by oil and gas and here's an opportunity to show that there's green industry and opportunity in the Peace region as well."