

## **SPRING VALLEY WIND FARM (NEWS/FEATURE, RENO PUBLIC RADIO)**

**INTRO:** Nevada's first commercial-scale wind farm opened last week 20 miles east of Ely [EE-lee]. Besides their imposing presence on the landscape, KUNR's Michael Hagerty reports the wind turbines are having an effect on the area in other ways too. (15)

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### **swooshing nats (04)**

The blades of a tall white wind turbine gently whisk in a circle against the surge of a strong easterly wind. Behind it, Wheeler Peak – on the western edge of Great Basin National Park – is a stark shadowy wall shrouded by passing storm clouds. (14/18)

### **Thunder (03/21)**

There are 66 turbines in all that make up the Spring Valley Wind Farm. Each has a tower as high as a 28-story building. They're staggered from north to south along the length of Spring Valley – that's 77 acres of BLM land about 20 miles east of Ely.

The wind farm has begun generating power for surrounding areas. Some of it will power homes as far away as Reno. And, eventually, when a stalled major north-south transmission line is completed, it'll even supply power to Las Vegas. But the wind farm is also generating some business for the surrounding communities – and even a little controversy. (33/54)

### **sizzling (02/56)**

Just 20 miles back to the west in Ely, a cook is browning ground sausage in a pan as he makes breakfast at the All Aboard Café and Inn. It's a bed-and-breakfast just blocks from Ely's old railroad depot.

Tricia Asusta is a co-owner. She took over the business last year, just as the construction began on the wind farm. Many of the construction workers stayed at her B-and-B for days at a time. (22/118)

**tricia-upstairs—***"We were lucky and fortunate enough to have them stay up stairs...they became like family because they worked out there for two-and-a-half months. So that helped out...gave us a really nice boost."* (22/140)

Gary Perea [puh-REE-uh] is the vice chairman of the White Pine County Commission. He says the wind farm, along with new mines and other projects in the area, has made a noticeable change. (09/149)

**parea-alive—***"So it's kind of an exciting time for White Pine County and having the wind energy has added to that...motels and RV parks are full...the community is alive."* (14/203)

But will it last? Now that construction is done at Spring Valley, Tricia Asusta says there's a little less demand at the B-and-B, but there still will be workers coming through to maintain and repair the turbines, and those are hotel nights the All Aboard might not otherwise fill.

Regardless, she says the bump has been enough for her to diversify her business, adding a catering service. She now supports three full-time and five part-time employees, and she says – in a town of about 4,000 – any economic influx is a good thing. (27/230)

**tricia-ithelps**—*"It does. It helps. Anything helps bringing people into town."*  
(04/207)

There are other things the wind farm brings to town – namely additional tax revenue. However, Pattern Energy, the San Francisco-based company that's running Spring Valley, is receiving 20 years of tax abatements. And there was some concern from White Pine County that they'd be getting less revenue from the project, when its mere presence means more potential county expenses for things like maintaining roads around the site.

So, in return, Pattern Energy is taking a page from the many mining companies that are the region's hallmark industry. For instance: The company's donating to the county schools and community college, and giving \$50,000 to the local library. Here's Pattern's CEO Mike Garland, speaking at the Spring Valley ribbon cutting. (39/246)

**mike-addition**—*"We're trying to be a part of the community as well as the incredible friendliness of the community. So I think it's going to be a great addition for everybody."* (10/256)

When a new industrial development becomes part of the community, it can also bring with it NIMBY – the sentiment of "not in my back yard." Spring Valley's backyard includes Great Basin National Park, over the mountains just 40 miles to the southeast.

Originally, when park Superintendent Andy Ferguson heard about plans for the wind farm, he was against it. Great Basin is known for its pristine night skies that draw stargazers from around the region. (24/320)

**andy-particulate**—*"One of the things that we're so proud of here and is part of the GBNP is these long vistas. And if you have lots of extra particulate matter...creating haze...then you don't have the same air quality."* (09/329)

He says, so far, the jury's still out. From the park you can only see the wind farm from a handful of high-altitude vantage points. So, other than the change to the scenery, it's not as bad as he feared. (10/339)

**andy-cometopass**—*"I think we're still forming an opinion of what impacts we'll ultimately see here with regard to the park. At first blush it doesn't appear to have the impacts I was so very concerned about. But I still don't know for a fact how it will come to pass."* (12/351)

And there are other residents who share a backyard with Spring Valley...(03/354)

### **bat-nats (02/356)**

For just eight weeks out of the year, Mexican free-tailed bats migrate through the region. Before Spring Valley was built, two environmental organizations sued to block it, accusing the BLM of circumventing environmental regulations to get the project approved. They alleged the wind turbines might adversely affect the habitat of the bats — along with sage grouse. But the two sides reached a settlement in the case. The plaintiffs in the case could not be reached for comment.

Pattern Energy has installed radar to monitor when bats are in the area so operators can shut the turbines off. Again, Pattern CEO Mike Garland. (34/430)

**garland-doitright**—*"And we've agreed to shut down the project if there are too many bats in the area...It's never been done like this...commitment is what we like. The commitment to do it right."* (07/437)

The ultimate affect the wind farm has on the area economically and environmentally remains to be seen. But, at least for now, it's making a noticeable short-term difference for the area. Here's State Assemblyman Pete Goicoechea, who represents Ely and the surrounding counties. (14/451)

**pete-shotinthearm**—*"Whether it's been the mining boom or the renewable energy or just construction, you know we didn't really get impacted with the same recession that hit Las Vegas and Reno...rural counties managed to survive a little easier. This is a real shot in the arm."* (10/501)

Michael Hagerty, Reno Public Radio News. (503)

**HOST OUT:** And you can find more on the Spring Valley Wind Farm – including video of the wind turbines – at KUNR.ORG. (06)