

# Five wind generation projects slated for construction in rural villages

An old energy maker with a new image will start making appearances around the state.

Five wind generation projects are slated for construction this year, crossing the state from Skagway to Kotzebue, with Kodiak, Cold Bay and a fishing village called Nelson Lagoon in between.

Shining new bladed towers of steel, backed by systems of storage batteries will be startling contrast to the wooden and jerry-rigged contraptions that served many Alaskan villages years ago. The storage batteries will serve as a back-up system, storing energy for up to three or four days, just in case the wind dies down, which isn't likely in these locations.

Governor Jay Hammond has had a growing concern about the

availability and price of fuel, especially to rural Alaskans, which has made these wind generation projects a viable alternative, according to the state energy director.

"Many Alaskan villages suffer through fuel prices of \$1.50, \$2.00 and even \$2.50 for a gallon of fuel," according to Bill McConkey, "and even the lower prices are very high by urban standards. And these high prices, combined with difficulties of transportation and weather, are placed upon those Alaskans who can least afford it. The time for continued and sophisticated use of alternate energy has come."

The Alaska Energy Office, with the Governor's Office, submitted the wind proposals this year to

the legislature and met approval and support. The projects are in the planning stages with construction slated starting this summer.

"The wind projects will do more than provide essential power," McConkey said. "They will provide information on performance, phasing, icing, salt spray deterioration and various alternatives for storage, inversion, overload and gusting. We are especially interested in their cold weather performance."

The Kotzebue system will provide power for the Kotzebue Community College facility and give the college an "on-the-side" teaching opportunity for courses in wind generator maintenance

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and technology.

"And the Nelson Lagoon gives us an exciting opportunity to test our wind equipment in a village situation," he said. "It will provide the villagers with electricity to run their lighting, televisions, stereos, and other small appliances. Also, we can provide power for larger items, such as washing machines on an intermittent basis. But of further importance is the opportunity to cut the cost of fuel by 20 to 30 percent by running stack robbers, a simple device that attaches to the pipe of an oil stove to save fuel."

The Cold Bay project will utilize an existing power distribution grid to provide a portion of the energy needed at the large state airport located there. Northern Power and Engineering Corporation, their local utility, will provide significant manpower needed to build and maintain the project. The records of the National Weather Service at Cold Bay show that location to be one of the best in the state for wind power generation."

"The Skagway and Kodiak locations are still in the planning stages for their best use," McConkey said, "but we may

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implement a project using wind power for agriculture in Kodiak."

All projects will be monitored and recorded, with the information made available to the public, according to the energy director. "We hope to prove wind power to be a viable economic alternative to fossil fuels and that these alternate energy projects will be the first of many serving all Alaskans."