

Project Beethoven Winds of change sweep region

By [Marcus Traxler](#) on Oct 21, 2014 at 8:01 p.m.



Five of the completed wind turbines in the Project Beethoven wind farm stand Tuesday in Charles Mix County. (Marcus Traxler/Republic)

TRIPP — The physical landscape is not the only thing changing with an area wind farm project.

The \$110 to \$120 million wind project is being built at the border of Bon Homme, Charles Mix and Hutchinson counties. A construction headquarters of sorts has been created at the corner of 406th Avenue and 291st Street, located on the border between Hutchinson and Bon Homme counties.

B&H Wind President Ron Hornstra, of Avon, said it is nice to finally have the project going at full speed.

"It feels really good to be forward after all of these years, that's for sure," he said.

B&H Wind, the group of local investors who had been leading the project five years in the making, recently sold its ownership to a wholly owned subsidiary of a German company that operates in agriculture and energy.

With the changeover in progress, construction continues to roll on. Six turbines were finished by Monday and most of the turbines are expected to be finished by the end of the year, which is a better outlook than what was seen in June when construction was delayed by issues with a federal production tax credit.

Hornstra said he didn't want to get into specifics about the sale because there are still details being worked out. He deferred questions about the construction itself to on-site managers for BayWa, who did not return calls on Tuesday. Calls to BayWa Renewable Energy's U.S. headquarters in San Diego were not returned.

The project changed hands in September, when BayWa Renewable Energy Wind LLC announced that it had acquired all rights to the 80 megawatt B&H wind project and secured the 43 General Electric wind turbines to be constructed. The California-based company is a subsidiary of a German firm called BayWa and has brought more than 800 megawatts of renewable power online. The price of the sale has not been disclosed.

Another funding source had been hinted at before. In December 2013, Hornstra told The Daily Republic that B&H was looking to finalize a deal with an equity partner to fully fund the project.

Each of the BayWa Wind projects takes on a composer's name -- like Chopin, Mozart and Wagner, for example. In the case of the project near Tripp Lake, it will be known as Project Beethoven.

In the release announcing the sale in September, BayWa Renewable Energy CEO Matthias Taft said the project would be BayWa's fifth U.S. wind project since starting business in the country three years ago.

General Electric will operate the wind turbines and provide maintenance support for five years. The company said it was the first turbine supply agreement signed between GE and BayWa.

Roland Jurgens, senior project manager representing B&H Wind, said he's still involved in the project to an extent but assets are changing over to BayWa's control.

"The turbine components are still arriving and everything is still moving right along," Jurgens said.

He said the timeline for the project has improved and the 43 turbines -- initially described as being built in two phases -- will all go up at once. The project is in better shape than it was this summer, when construction was delayed due to concern about the federal production tax credit.

"We're probably still behind schedule, but we're ahead of where we were this summer," Jurgens said.

Electricity likely won't be transferred until February, when the substation can be fully built, Jurgens said.

B&H Wind is still an investor group, Jurgens said, and said it's possible it could look to build additional turbines at a different location.