

Masthead

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Wind farm foreseen for northeastern N.C.

An Oregon company is seeking regulatory approval to erect North Carolina's first commercial wind farm in Pasquotank and Perquimans counties in the northeastern corner of the state.

Iberdrola Renewables wants to build 150 wind turbines capable of generating 300 megawatts of electricity - enough to power 55,000 or more homes - on flat agricultural land in the region.

The company typically doesn't disclose its projects' costs and hasn't yet finalized them in this instance, company spokesman Paul Copleman said. However, he added, on the basis of the industry average of \$2 million per megawatt, Iberdrola is looking at an investment in the neighborhood of \$600 million.

Wind farms in other states have run into resistance from critics worried about ruining scenic views, hurting migrating birds and other issues. In this state, lawmakers have banned wind farms in the mountains, but many are encouraging such development on the coast. Gov. Bev Perdue is eager to attract more green-energy investments and jobs.

"Projects such as the proposed Iberdrola Renewables wind farm can help us lay the foundation for North Carolina to lead the nation in clean, homegrown energy," Perdue said in a prepared statement.

Iberdrola said it filed its application with the N.C. Utilities Commission on Thursday. The next step would be a public hearing on the

application, which typically occurs within three months, Copleman said.

"This is an important first step in a very lengthy process," said Julie Robinson, spokeswoman for the N.C. Sustainable Energy Association, an advocacy group that also supports the project.

If the project goes forward, said Robinson, it has the potential to attract manufacturers that make wind turbine components.

Iberdrola is the U.S. subsidiary of Iberdrola Renovables, a Spanish company that is the world's largest provider of wind power. Iberdrola has more than 40 wind farms in the United States.

Copleman said the company has had public meetings with interested residents in the region.

"We've been really pleased with the amount of community support we have seen so far," he said.

Iberdrola said construction of the wind farm would create more than 400 jobs and annual lease payments to local landowners could approach \$1 million.

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