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Highland Wind Project Receives Final Permit, Starts Construction

Virginia's first wind project broke ground this weekend in Highland County, setting in motion a new era of renewable energy for the Commonwealth. Highland New Wind will build a 38 MW project in western Highland County. Last week, Highland County issued the long-awaited permits paving the way for construction to begin.

"This is a day we have long waited for," said Henry T. "Mac" McBride. "For many years, I looked forward to helping the environment and the Highland community, while preserving our family's land for future generations. Development of this wind project will achieve each of these goals as well as open new doors for renewable projects in Virginia."

"We are proud to have blazed the trail to a renewable energy future for Virginia right here on our property in Highland County," McBride added.

The process has been underway for over seven years and has gone through multiple rounds of public hearings, approvals (both local and state) and litigation.

Early construction activities include: site preparation, foundation prep, installation of construction entrances, installation of erosion and sediment control, and road building.

The \$80 million project, started in 2002 by Henry T. McBride on 220 acres of his own land near the Virginia-West Virginia border, will use 19 Gamesa G87 wind turbines, producing 38 megawatts of electricity. It is also expected to provide as much as \$200,000 per year in tax revenue for the County.

In January 2008, the Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC) awarded HNWD approval for the Commonwealth's first renewable wind project. In 2005 the Highland County Board of Supervisors approved a Conditional Use Permit for the site on generations-old open cow pastures with high elevations (over 4,000 ft) that are some of the windiest ridges in the east.

Financing and power purchase agreements are still being negotiated on the project, which is expected to be completed by mid-2010.