

Business Facilities Breaking News

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Oregon: A Wind Winner

Western Community Energy (WCE), a community-based wind energy developer, is already expanding its headquarters in Bend, Ore., after choosing to relocate to the state just six months ago.

"Over the course of the last several years, Oregon's sustainable industries have truly begun to thrive," says Tim McCabe, director of the Oregon Economic & Community Development Department (OECDD). "WCE is just one of many innovative companies that have discovered the state and the Governor's commitment to sustainable industries and especially renewable energy."

Oregon has become a hotbed of renewable energy companies in a variety of sectors such as solar, wind, geothermal and tidal. The wind energy sector in Oregon has continued to grow over the years and has attracted major companies such as Vestas, the world's leading supplier of wind power, which has announced plans to expand its North American headquarters in Portland, OR.

According to WCE's Chief Financial Officer Michelle Betz, the company chose Oregon for its headquarters because of the state's commitment to renewable energy through a variety of financial and tax incentives and programs such as:

- the Oregon Business Energy Tax Credit (BETC), which covers up to 50 percent of a qualifying project's applicable costs;
- the Energy Trust of Oregon (ETO), which provides resources and cash incentives to help homeowners, farms, ranches, businesses and government entities install wind power projects of up to 20 megawatts; and
- the Small Energy Loan Program (SELP), which promotes energy conservation and renewable energy resource development by offering low-interest loans for qualifying projects.

"From a financial perspective Oregon is a fantastic place for our company to do business," says Betz. "In addition, the state seems to understand at a very basic level the importance of promoting renewable energy projects."

WCE plans to capitalize on Oregon's bounty of wind as well. In total, WCE booked \$1.4 million in wind energy projects in 2008. To put perspective on the increase in projects for WCE, the

company already booked \$8.2 million in new projects in the first 15 days of January 2009. The company currently employs seven full-time employees and expects to hire an additional 11 employees within the next month.

One major project that WCE recently completed is the Banner Wind Project, Alaska's largest wind farm located in the city of Nome. A joint venture between Bering Straits Native Corporations and Sitnasuak Native Corporation, the 1.17 megawatt project will offset nearly 200,000 gallons of diesel fuel per year and nearly double Alaska's installed wind capacity.