



# Wind firms plans to start building soon

By Christina Beringer

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International wind energy company Acciona is in the final stages of putting their mark on Thomas County. After five years of preparations, plans to construct a 72-turbine wind farm south of Colby have almost come to fruition.

Three representatives from Acciona's Chicago office presented information on the latest progress and received informal approval from Thomas County commissioners Monday morning for the development plan. Also attending the presenta-

tion to give feedback and ask questions were farmers who might be affected by the wind farm and the Thomas County Economic Development Director Christy Rocha.

Before a vote can be made at the next meeting, on Friday, Dec. 30, the plan will be reviewed by County Attorney Kevin Berens.

Lars Dorr, senior project development manager, said the company is basically just waiting on final approval from their main office in Spain and the last permit they need will be received soon.

"We are getting all of the approvals and permits now so when the head guy

in Spain says go, then we can get building right away," said Dorr. "It's important that we get all 72 turbines operational by the end of the year 2012 to take advantage of a tax credit."

Dorr explained they hope to start in February and assuming all of the final engineering plans are complete, turbines will start showing up in the summer and early part of fall 2012. He added that although the turbines will be running, final construction phases will continue into 2013 to ensure roads and other landmarks are cleaned up and returned to their previous state of condition or better.

"Right now, we are also bidding out for

contractors and before the project starts, we plan to have an open house to introduce contractors and give a presentation on the project," said Dorr. "We will also let the community know when large shipments of equipment and big trucks are coming through so they can be prepared."

After the meeting, Dorr and his colleague, Development Director Peter Kenyon, explained that the wind farm will have about 10 employees who will also be introduced at the open house.

Dorr said the energy generated will most likely be used locally, since energy follows the path of least resistance and probably will end up in within the South-

west Power Pool. He said Kansas is a member of the pool which allows power companies the opportunity to buy their energy at competitive prices and share resources within a fair trading market. However, he said their goal is to sell the energy at a fixed rate to one company.

He said the benefits of having local energy do not stop there.

"We are tenants of the landowner and pay rent to use their land, providing income to local property owners," said Dorr after the meeting. "We will also pay the county about \$2,200 per megawatt, per

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# Foundation starts Dennen Field fund

The Thomas County Community Foundation announced the addition of a new pass through fund, the Dennen Field Locker Room Project Fund. This fund was created by the Colby High School All Sports Booster Club and the purpose of it is to support the construction of a new building at Dennen Field in Colby that can be used for a locker room, storage and restroom facility.

The Colby High All Sports Booster Club has been raising

money for this project for several years and will continue to have fund raisers such as shirt sales, brick sales and book sales.

The public is encouraged to contribute to this fund by sending their tax-deductible check, payable to Thomas County Community Foundation, to 350 South Range Suite 14, Colby, Kan. 67701. Dennen Field should also be written in the memo section of the check to ensure fund placement.



LORI MILLER/Golden Plains Elementary School

Student teacher Brandy Bussen worked with her second grade class during her last week of teaching. Bussen plans to return to Golden Plains after she graduates from Fort Hays State University this month.

# Student teacher to return as assistant

By Angela Ritter

Golden Plains School District

Brandy Bussen finished up her last week of student teaching at Golden Plains Elementary on Dec. 9. She has been working with second grade teacher Lori Miller since school started last fall.

Bussen graduated from Golden Plains High School in 2007 and attended Colby Community College where she received her Associate of Arts in 2009. She will graduate from Fort Hays State University this month.

"I love working with children," she said. "My fifth grade teacher really made a huge difference in

my life. She truly cared about her students. I want to be able to make a difference in the life of a child because they are our future.

"Student teaching has been a great experience. I was blessed with the opportunity to work with the staff at Golden Plains. Mrs. Miller has taught me more about teaching in this one semester than I have learned in my courses at FHSU. I could not have asked for a better mentor teacher."

Miller said having a student teacher in the classroom is always a neat experience.

"At the same time it is also a

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KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

Dozens of eastbound trucks had to stop at Oasis and Bosselman's truck stops in Colby on Tuesday. A snowstorm that

dropped as much as 15 inches in parts of Kansas forced the Kansas Department of Transportation to close I-70.

# Snowstorm forces I-70 closure Tuesday

By John Hanna

The Associated Press

TOPEKA (AP) — Holiday travelers were breathing a sigh of relief today after a storm that dumped up to 15 inches of snow and forced the closure I-70 east of Colby moved out of the region, allowing crews to clear drifts and stranded motorists to leave roadside hotels.

The storm was blamed for at least two fatal car accidents as it crawled from eastern New Mexico and Colorado through the Texas Panhandle, Oklahoma and Kansas. The fierce winds and heavy snowfall closed several major roadways before weakening Tuesday and moving into Missouri and toward the Great Lakes.

But another storm threatened some of those areas hit earlier in the week, including the Rockies and parts of Wyoming, New Mexico and western Kansas. Those areas could see another round of snow and wind over the next few days, but it won't be as heavy as the recent storm, according to meteorologist Brian Barjenbruch of the National Weather Service in Topeka.

"It's tough to match what we had in some areas with this past storm," he said early Wednesday.

Meanwhile, authorities still



Even though Colby got less than an inch Monday night, I-70 was closed from the east exit to WaKeeney on Tuesday because of much deeper snowfall east of town.

reported snow drifts of up to 10 feet high in southeast Colorado, and Texas officials warned drivers to stay off the road in the Panhandle so crews could remove ice and snow. Some highways in the western half of the Oklahoma Panhandle remained closed early Wednesday, with transportation officials warning of hazardous conditions.

At least 40 people were stranded at the Longhorn Motel in Boise City, Okla., where manager Pedro Segovia said blowing snow had created drifts 2- and 3-foot high and closed the main road.

"Some people cannot even get out of their houses. There is too

much snow," Segovia said Tuesday. "It was blowing. We've got big piles. It's real bad."

Receptionist MaKenzee Grove sympathized with the 50 or so people stranded at the hotel where she works in Guymon, about 60 miles east of Boise City.

"I have this rinky-dink car that does not do well in this," Grove said. "If we wouldn't have had the wind, it wouldn't have been as bad. The winds ... made the drifts really bad."

A few guests traveling to Oklahoma City managed to leave Tuesday, but others were staying another night until all the roads were clear, she said.

Officials reopened Interstate

40 in the Texas Panhandle and New Mexico, and portions of Interstate 70 in western Kansas that had been closed Tuesday. New Mexico reopened a closed section of Interstate 25, the main route from Santa Fe to the Colorado line, after crews cleared drifts as high as 5 feet.

In Kansas, schools in Manhattan canceled classes Tuesday, anticipating several inches of snow. The National Weather Service reported later that 3 inches or less fell.

To the east, a cold rain pelted the Topeka area, turned into a mix of light sleet and snow without much accumulation and tapered off. Forecasters said the storm became less potent as it moved northeast toward the Great Lakes.

Kansas Highway Patrol Trooper Ben Gardner said the patrol dealt with dozens of accidents in which motorists slid off highways Tuesday.

"We had ice-covered roads, covered by snow packed on top," he said.

The late-autumn snowstorm lumbered into the region Monday, turning roads to ice and reducing visibility to zero. Many of the areas hit had enjoyed relatively balmy 60-degree temperatures just 24 hours earlier.

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# Governor may be willing to modify finance ideas

TOPEKA (AP) — A top aide says Gov. Sam Brownback is willing to consider ideas from Kansas legislators for modifying his plan to overhaul how the state finances its public schools.

Brownback policy director Landon Fulmer briefed members of the budget-writing Senate Ways and Means Committee on Tuesday about the governor's plan.

Senators questioned how funding for new buildings and bus services would work. The plan is designed to give the state's 286 local school boards more flexibility, and, unlike the current school finance formula, it wouldn't target money specifically for such items.

Fulmer said the governor will work with legislators on such issues.

But Fulmer already has said he doesn't think

a plan will pass unless it eliminates a state cap on local property taxes, as Brownback proposes.

