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Macoupin County joins statewide wind monitoring program

Macoupin County-A bean field between Scottville and Modesto is the latest site of a statewide wind monitoring project sponsored by the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation and conducted by Western Illinois University's Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA).

Standing 165 feet, a temporary meteorological tower (M.E.T.), will record wind speed data for one year to forecast the amount of electricity that could be generated from the wind in the area. The recorded data is posted on the Illinois Wind web site for the benefit of the public and the site owners. The data will also be used to make wind velocity maps of the state, according to Roger Brown of IIRA.

"Being a part of this study is an opportunity that members of the Macoupin County Board felt we couldn't afford to miss. Not only is it a chance to support renewable fuels, but a wind development would help the county economically," said Macoupin County Board Chairman Andrew Manar. "Before applying to become part of the study, we held a public hearing to gauge citizen interest and were gratified to see that many of the landowners in the area were interested and even offered to host the tower."

The Scottville/Modesto area was chosen because it has some of the highest elevations in the county, and the open spaces needed for a wind development. Bob and Marian Kerr own the site, chosen by IIRA. A limited number of sites are chosen each year.

"We offered our property because we believe a potential wind development would benefit not only us as the landowners, but the entire area," said Bob Kerr. Marian Kerr added that even if the wind velocity isn't enough for a wind development, the data will be put to good use in the wind velocity maps.

District 6 Macoupin County Board Member Judy Bacon said the county is proud to be one of the four sites in the state chosen out of more than 80 applications for the program. Bacon, who lives in Palmyra, added that the interest shown by landowners in the area and the county's willingness to sponsor the application were key to Macoupin County being chosen.

More information on wind energy can be found on the Illinois Wind web site at www.illinoiswind.org.