

Texas wind farm plan creates controversy

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Controversy swirled in Sarita, Texas, during a public hearing about what would be the first large wind energy project along the Texas Gulf Coast.

The project, backed by international utility giant Scottish Power, would involve erecting 267 wind turbines along the eastern edge of the giant Kenedy Ranch, considered the last large tract of native coastal prairie habitat in Texas.

The hearing Monday to discuss a tax abatement sought by the developers drew more than 100 people, the San Antonio Express-News reported Tuesday.

Although supported by most county officials, citizens' opposition to the plan focused on wildlife and taxation matters. Opponents say a proposed 10-year tax abatement would deprive the region of hundreds of millions of dollars in tax revenues.

Supporters of the project say it will provide a clean source of electricity and replenish the county tax base, now dependent on oil and gas production.

If approved quickly, the first phase of the project could be producing electricity within a year, with the second phase becoming operational during late 2007.

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