AFFILIATED CONSTRUCTION TRADES FOUNDATION
A Division of the West Virginia State Building and Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO

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CHARLESTON, W.VA. _ Construction of a proposed wind energy facility in Greenbrier and Nicholas counties would have at least a $25 million impact on the West Virginia private sector economy, according to a study commissioned by the Affiliated Construction and Trades Foundation. It could be as high as $104 million, the study said.

"This shows the importance of construction jobs to our economy, both directly and through their ripple effect, as they put bread on the table for local workers, who in turn spend their paychecks at local businesses," said ACT Director Steve White. "It also provides a significant reason regulators need to approve the project."

Beech Ridge Energy LLC, a subsidiary of Invenergy LLC, is proposing to build a 124-turbine, 186-megawatt wind farm and related facilities in Greenbrier and Nicholas counties. Earlier this year, Beech Ridge signed an agreement with West Virginia State Building and Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO, to hire local union workers to build the facility.

The $300 million project would create 215 new construction jobs during the nine month project. The study by Chris Thompson, senior research associate at the Institute for Policy Studies at Johns Hopkins University, said the minimum direct impact of the construction jobs alone would be $16 million, with another $9.3 million coming in ripple effects on other industries and households.

"The construction of the project will result in a substantial positive impact on the local economy and local employment," Thompson said in testimony filed with the state Public Service Commission, which is expected to decide by August whether to grant Beech Ridge a siting certificate for the project. "The construction will also positively impact the state economy. These positive impacts will be the result of substantial increases in sales, taxes, business activities and jobs."

In addition to the construction jobs, the study estimates an additional 102 jobs would be created, mainly in architectural and engineering services, food service, wholesale trade, employment service and automotive repair and maintenance.

Using a "high impact" scenario, the study found the Beech Ridge project could add as much as $104 million and more than 1,000 jobs to the state's private sector economy. Thompson's study also suggested the project would add at least $1.9 million in federal taxes and $817,000 in state taxes, mostly through individual income taxes. Under the "high impact" assumptions, those figures jump to $7.9 million and $3.4 million.

The study does not look at the impact of the estimated 20 permanent jobs the facility would create. "To the extent the indirect and induced impacts are in reality maintained in years beyond the construction period, the eventual total impacts of the project on the state's economy will be even higher," Thompson wrote.

"By all measures, this project represents and important step for West Virginia and should move forward," White said.

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