

Border Farm To Construct Windmill For Electric Power

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Will Help Cut Energy Costs

By ROBIN SMITH, Staff Writer

DERBY LINE, VT - A farm on the U.S.-Canadian border above the Interstate 91 port will soon have a 120-foot windmill.

The windmill to be erected on a pastured hill will be visible for miles across Derby Line village in Vermont and neighboring Stanstead, Quebec.

"I am close to the village so there will be lots of eyes on it," farm owner Bryan Davis said Wednesday.

He hopes people approve, or at least understand, when the windmill is erected in the next week or so.

The windmill's electric power will make a big difference to Bryan and Susan Davis and their dairy operation at aptly named Grand View Farm.

"We're doing what we can to stay in business," he said. "I hope to save about half my electricity costs."

With an electricity bill of \$800 a month, spending about \$22,000 on a windmill could make the difference, he said. The state is contributing another \$22,000 through a federal grant.

The windmill is expected to pay for itself in six years, Davis said.

Grand View Farm, at 110 milking cows and 100 calves, is too small for a methane-powered generation system, he said.

Instead, the "net-metered" windmill will run some of the farm's equipment during the

morning and evening milking. The rest of the time, the windmill will send electricity back into the grid, reducing Davis's electric bill.

It all depends on the weather. With winds of 8 mph, the windmill and its 22-foot rotors will power a light bulb, Davis said. But at 12 mph, it will run equipment in the barn on this frequently breezy hillside.

The contractor installing the windmill has high hopes for this windmill, Davis said.

Tom Halnon of Vermont Green Energy Systems of Middlebury told Davis the location is perfect to catch the prevailing winds.

"I hope the wind blows so hard it spins the meter hand right off," Davis said.

Having a windmill is a dream come true for Davis, 50.

He grew up farming with his father and mother, Roy and Shirley Davis, who own the Border Farm below his on Holland Road. His father is 80 and still farming.

"When I was a kid, my father always wanted a windmill," said Davis. Thirty or 40 years ago the windmills just powered batteries, but Davis said he remained interested.

An avid reader about the proposed wind turbine farms across Vermont, Davis said he saw a news story this past winter about windmill grants for farmers, and applied to the Vermont Department of Public Service.

These grants have helped erect windmills at Danville School, the Alburg welcome center in northwestern Vermont, and on college campuses like Middlebury and soon the University of Vermont, said Erin Bralich, administrator of the federal grant program in the Public Service Department.

The \$1.5 million grant program secured by Sen. James Jeffords from the U.S. Department of Energy is popular, introducing small-scale windmills in demonstration, farming or education projects across the state, Bralich said.

"It was an overwhelming response, actually," she said.

Once Davis secured the grant, he sought approval in June to erect the windmill from regulators at the Vermont Public Service Board.

The board required Davis to notify immediate neighbors, the Derby selectmen and planning commission, according to Susan Hudson, clerk of the Vermont Public Service Board. No one filed comments or complaints about the proposed windmill, and a hearing was not held.

The Public Service Board issued a certificate of public good to Davis on July 15, saying the windmill fits into the board's net metering program.

The goals of the program "are to encourage private investment in renewable energy resources, stimulate the economic growth of the state and enhance the continued diversification of energy sources used in Vermont," board members James Volz, David Coen and John Burke states in the certificate.

The windmill could go up as early as next week, weather permitting, Davis said.

The windmill could come as a surprise to some who live on the other side of the border, or "the line," as it's called here.

People like Dr. Gilles Bouchard of Stanstead, who sees many Vermont patients, have told Davis they admire the view of his fields.

Davis said he told Dr. Bouchard about his plans for a windmill, and the doctor told him it was a great idea.