

'Wind-wind' plan boosts local agency

By [Steven Friederich](#) - Daily World Writer

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Sen. Jim Hargrove jokes that he's helped find a "wind-wind" solution to boost the Coastal Community Action Program's bottom line.

The Aberdeen-based non-profit group that helps low-income families around the county is working with the lawmaker from Hoquiam on legislation that would allow it to install wind turbines on the coast. The nonprofit would then sell the "green energy" and use the profits to help low-income families.

"I've always been concerned with low-income people and people having trouble paying for their housing and electrical bills," Hargrove said during a committee hearing on his bill. "There is never enough money to go around. This totally seems like a win-win or 'wind-wind' idea."

'Energy Freedom'

The legislation would allow the non-profit group to qualify for grants from the state's Energy Freedom Program, which was created last year to spur development of alternative energy projects.

Hargrove's bill passed unanimously out of the Senate. Last Wednesday, it received its first committee hearing in the House.

Craig Dublanko, a financial director with the Coastal Community Action Program, told the House committee that in 2000 the agency installed two 50-meter test towers at Grayland.

The goal was to make sure there would be enough wind to turn the wind blades and generate power.

There was more than enough wind, Dublanko said.

"The ridgeline we're looking at can handle six turbines, and subsequent ridgelines along the coast could add even more as you head toward Tokeland," he said.

\$7.8 million

To start with, the group wants to install three turbines at 1.5 megawatts each. The cost

would be about \$7.8 million.

Hargrove said he wants the state to contribute \$5 million from the Energy Freedom Program to get the turbines up and going, with federal or private grants filling in the rest.

"We have had discussions with Senators Cantwell, Murray and Congressman Dicks and we're trying to get the rest of this put together," Hargrove said.

Dublanko said this project would be the first wind turbines on the coast of Washington.

"But this isn't a pie in the sky idea," Hargrove said. "I'm impressed with how much research they've done, how much technical information they've finished."

Troy Colley, executive director of the Coastal Community Action Program, says the wind turbines could generate up to \$600,000 a year for the next 25 years for the agency.

Currently, the group's energy assistance program is capped off at 300 families and it regularly turns away about 30 families per month, Colley said.

"Unfortunately the need is much greater than existing funds can meet," Dublanko adds. "This may support as many as 1,000 families every year for the next 25 years."

There's also a possibility for tourism growth with people driving out to the Grayland bluffs to see the turbines, according to Dan Wood, a member of the Coastal Community Action Program's board of directors and a former Grays Harbor County commissioner.

State senators who heard the legislation earlier this month lauded its direction. Sen. Erik Poulsen, chairman of the Senate Water Energy & Telecommunications Committee, called it "a very creative approach."

In the House Technology, Energy & Communications Committee, meantime, representatives were more lukewarm. Several members questioned the need for more wind turbines and the fairness of Community Action Programs being able to apply for grant money for such programs to the exclusion of other non-profit groups.

"We have electric utilities that are non-profit and this (legislation) wouldn't let them to do this, and I don't know if it makes sense for one to do it and not the other," said Rep. Jeff Morris, D-San Juan.

Sen. Hargrove said he's optimistic the bill will make it out of committee, and is amenable to making all non-profits eligible for future Energy Freedom Program grants.

"I'm working to get the money in the Senate capital budget as well," Hargrove said Friday. "There's a statewide initiative on green energy and with Grays Harbor focused on green products, this just seems a perfect fit."

The measure is Senate Bill 5383.

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