



Crow Creek receives federal grant to launch billion-dollar wind farm

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Leaders of the [Crow Creek](#) Sioux are celebrating following the award of a federal grant they hope will kick-start a billion-dollar wind farm that could become a first among South Dakota reservations.

The Crow Creek tribe, based in central [South Dakota](#), learned Friday that it was chosen as one of 21 tribes across the country to share in \$3.2 million worth of grants from the U.S. Department of the Interior for energy and mineral projects.

While the tribe doesn't yet know how much [money](#) it [will](#) receive, Chairman Brandon Sazue said Monday he is confident it will be enough to [set in motion](#) a project that has been discussed on the reservation for years.

"We never hardly hear [good news](#)," he said. "This was one of the greatest pieces of news I have heard since being chairman for Crow Creek."

Sazue and other tribal leaders hope that the wind [farm](#) will not only provide [free electricity](#) to the reservation's 2,000 residents but generate significant profits from the sale of electricity off the reservation.

The proposed wind farm is on 7,000 acres of tribal-owned land about 12 miles north of Fort Thompson, the reservation's biggest town. The tribe estimates the site could produce 100 to 400 megawatts of [power](#), which could power 100,000 to 400,000 homes.

Steven Nagourney, a project [adviser](#) and a private [investor](#) based in [New York](#), said the most important element of the project would be attracting enough private backers to fund the project.

While the [federal grant money](#) would pay for land, wind and ecological studies on the proposed site, he estimated the tribe would need about \$800 million to a billion dollars to bring a 400,000 megawatt wind farm to fruition.

However, Nagourney said he was confident the tribe could attract investors, based on the proposed site's close [proximity](#) to [transmission lines](#) and early studies of its energy potential.

"It's very excellent wind," he said.

If the tribe is able to attract enough [private investment](#), Nagourney estimated construction on the first phase of the project, a 100 megawatt wind farm, could begin in early 2016 and be completed by the end of the year.

If the project is a reality, it could become the second or third tribal-run wind farm in the nation. The Campo [Band](#) of Kumeyaay Indians has a wind farm in California. In Oklahoma, a wind farm is currently in development on [Cherokee land](#).

The Rosebud [Sioux reservation](#) in South Dakota has a single wind turbine, which powers the tribe's

casino and hotel complex. By comparison, Crow Creek's proposed 400 megawatt farm would have about 150 to 160 turbines.

Sazue, the tribe's chairman, said there is a [degree](#) of irony in the tribe's gambit on [wind power](#).

Sixty years ago, he said, his tribe was forcibly removed from land along the [Missouri River](#) to [make way](#) for the Big Bend Dam.

"What they didn't know is that they moved us up on land with potential for wind energy," he said. "No one would have realized that until a few years ago. There's gold in the air for us right now."