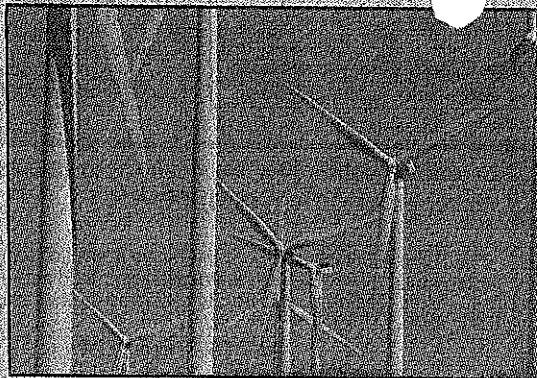


# Portage district gauging usage of wind power

By KATHY MELLOTT  
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JOHN RUCOSKY/THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT

A wind turbine similar to these may be built near Portage Area School District's Mountain Avenue campus.

"The other side of the coin is that we'll use it in our classrooms. It will really provide a great learning opportunity right here on campus," Trybus said.

Armed with an equipment and a technology grant from the Center for Collaborative Conservation at St. Francis University in Loretto, the Portage district put up a meteorological tower last month.

Earlier this week, the Central Cambria school

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board voted to apply to St. Francis for help in determining if the winds are sufficient and steady enough for a small turbine farm there.

Erik Foley, director of the St. Francis conservation center, said the university is aiding Portage through the Pennsylvania Wind Assessment Program.

"Basically, we work with anybody in Pennsylvania to test their wind resource," he said.

The university provides meteorological towers, such as the one on a hill behind the Portage schools, along with a team of students, faculty and consultants to monitor and analyze the wind data.

"Hopefully, it is with the results of creating community wind projects," he said of the

initiative, which is different from larger corporate projects such as the Allegheny Ridge Wind Farm being developed in Portage and other townships by Gamesa Corp.

"It's very grass roots, very much about rural economic development," Foley said Wednesday. "They are financed in a way that they are locally owned, so more of the economic benefits stays local."

Large turbines potentially could go up behind the school, Trybus said, estimating them to be 2 megawatts each - about the size of those being constructed for the nearby Allegheny Ridge farm.

Foley said the university worked with the district in determining the best site for the monitoring tower.

The three wind gauges are positioned on a 184-foot tower behind the athletic track of the Portage campus. District offi-

cials are hopeful that the results will show an average wind speed of 14 mph, ideal for a turbine.

"It's looking pretty good. On a calm day we see wind speeds of 10 to 13 mph," Trybus said.

If wind turbines behind the school are feasible, any construction would fall under the guidelines of the ordinance adopted by Portage Township last year calling for a 2,000-foot setback from other structures.

The law also regulates acceptable noise levels and other issues.

A variance on the 2,000-foot setback is possible. The only buildings within that distance would probably be the school, with the closest homes a sufficient distance, local officials said.

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