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South Dakota Wind Energy Association Organized; Board Elected, Goals Set

Pierre, SD- January 21, 2009

A successful effort has been made to establish the South Dakota Wind Energy Association (SDWEA). The initial membership and organizational board meeting was held in Pierre, SD on Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2009.

SDWEA's formation culminates several months of efforts to further encourage South Dakota wind development.

One of the key guiding principles of SDWEA will be to support the development of wind energy as a sustainable economic and environmentally-friendly resource for South Dakota and its citizens.

SDWEA will also act as a forum for education, research and reliable information about wind development and become a source of reliable information for state leaders and citizens on issues related to wind energy.

New officers were elected to lead the Board of Directors during the meeting. They include: President, Jeffrey L. Nelson, East River Electric Power Cooperative general manager; Vice President, Dr. Kevin Kephart, South Dakota State University vice president for research and dean of the graduate school; and Secretary/Treasurer, Toby Crow, Associated Contractors of South Dakota, executive vice president.

The board is comprised of representatives from each of the primary sponsoring organizations, four directors elected from within the membership and the at-large members.

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Nelson believes that widespread interest to promote wind energy in South Dakota was the driving force behind the association's creation. "South Dakota has the fourth best wind in the country and many people want to further maximize this potential. We look forward to SDWEA advancing the opportunities for South Dakotans as further wind energy is developed throughout our state," he said.

Another important decision by the Board was to select Steve Wegman as its Executive Director. Previously, Wegman worked as an analyst for the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission. "I am excited about what this association can do to provide a new perspective for advocating the expansion of this great resource for not only the benefit of project developers, but also for South Dakota," Wegman said.

The board and membership set SDWEA's goal for 2009 to create a blueprint for future wind development in South Dakota.

SDWEA intends to develop this blueprint through a series of community wind meetings as a means to produce a fresh look at the future development of wind energy in South Dakota. The initiative will focus on bringing together public and private interests and focus especially on enhancing the value of future wind development to communities, economic development and job creation, technical and higher institutions and for land owners.

SDWEA primary sponsors are the Associated General Contractors of SD, Inc; East River Electric Power Cooperative, Inc.; Missouri River Energy Services; Rural Learning Center; Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative, Inc.; SD Corn Council; SD Electric Utility Companies; SD Farm Bureau; SD Farmers Union and the South Dakota Rural Electric Association.

For those interested in joining SDWEA, contact Steve Wegman at 605-295-1221.

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