

Pickens Calls Off Massive Wind Farm in Texas



Businessman T. Boone Pickens discusses alternative energy at the National Clean Energy Summit in Las Vegas.

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HOUSTON -- Plans for the world's largest wind farm in the Texas panhandle have been scrapped, energy baron T. Boone Pickens said Tuesday, and he's looking for a home for 687 giant wind turbines.

Pickens has already ordered the turbines, which can stand 400 feet tall -- taller than most 30-story buildings.

"When I start receiving those turbines, I've got to ... like I said, my garage won't hold them," the legendary Texas oilman said. "They've got to go someplace."

Pickens' company Mesa Power ordered the turbines from General Electric Co. -- a \$2 billion investment -- a little more than a year ago. Pickens said he has leases on about 200,000 acres in Texas that were planned for the project, and he might place some of the turbines there, but he's also looking for smaller wind projects to participate in. He said he's looking at potential sites in the Midwest and Canada.

In Texas, the problem lies in getting power from the proposed site in the panhandle to a distribution system, Pickens said in an interview with The Associated Press in New York. He'd hoped to build his own transmission lines but he said there were technical problems.

Wind power is a big part of the "Pickens Plan," which was announced a year ago Wednesday. Pickens has spent \$60 million crisscrossing the country and buying advertising in an effort to reduce the nation's reliance on foreign oil.

"It doesn't mean that wind is dead," said Pickens, who runs the Dallas-based energy investment fund BP Capital. "It just means we got a little bit too quick off the blocks."

Pickens announced in 2007 plans to install the turbines in parts of four Texas panhandle counties.

He had hoped to complete the four-phase project in 2014 and eventually have 4,000 megawatts of capacity, enough to power more than one million homes. The total cost was expected to approach \$12 billion.

Renewable energy provides a small fraction of electricity used today, but the wind and solar sectors are the fastest growing in the U.S. In 2008, the U.S. became the world's leading provider of wind power.

Like most industries around the world, the recession has hurt wind turbine manufacturers and wind farm developers. Companies have shelved development plans and laid off workers.