

Bus trip to NH wind farm  
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Nina Keck



(Host) Officials from Vermont Community Wind have organized a bus trip to a wind farm in New Hampshire to try and build support for a large scale wind farm they're proposing in and around the Rutland County town of Ira.

Company officials say about 35 residents from the area will travel to Lempster, New Hampshire, on Saturday where a 24-megawatt wind farm has recently been built. VPR's Nina Keck has more.

(Keck) Vicki Arsenault owns Grant's Village Store in Middletown Springs. Standing behind the counter with her nine-month-old granddaughter, she says the wind farm proposal has been a hot topic and most people don't want it.

(Arsenault) "I'm still pretty open-minded on it. Part of me doesn't like the idea of all of these turbines and what it can do the ridge tops. However, we do need energy and I think I would like to go to one of the sites that is already set up and see it and hear it and see what my impression of that is."

(Keck) Jeff Wennberg, director of Community Affairs for Vermont Community Wind, says that's why they organized Saturday's bus trip to New Hampshire. He says it's important for people to see what a commercial wind farm looks and sounds like.

(Wennberg) "We don't want any buyer's remorse. We don't want anyone to say, 'Oh, if I'd only known it was going to be that big, or to look that way, it was going to make that much noise, I would never have agreed to support this.' That's the last thing I want to hear."

(Keck) Michael Klopchin is a retired utilities lineman who heads the Clarendon select board. He says he's seen enough wind farms to know that he doesn't want one on the ridgelines around his community. No one from the Clarendon Select Board will be on Saturday's bus trip and Klopchin says they've already decided to fight the project.

(Klopchin) "Sometimes you go on these trips and you're steered to something that looks a lot different from what may come into your community."

(Keck) Those who do take the trip, 40 miles south of Lebanon, will see a much smaller wind farm than what's being proposed for Rutland County. The town of Lempster has 12 turbines compared to the 45 proposed for Ira and several nearby towns. But officials with Vermont Community Wind say the height of the turbines and Lempster's topography will give people a good sense of what a wind farm in Ira might look like.

(Shklar) "It's a very difficult and very complicated decision for any individual to make and especially in a small town."

(Keck) Michael Shklar is an attorney who lives in Lempster. While not everyone in town is happy with the wind farm, he says the vast majority of local residents have supported the project from its inception. From an aesthetic point of view, he says no one wants to see a large wind farm go up in their community. But he says he and many others in Lempster believe you have to balance that with a concern for the greater good.

(Shklar) "Can we really legitimately expect that we're going to generate electricity from something unsightly or dangerous or environmentally horrid in someone else's town?"

(Keck) Shklar says he hopes visiting the wind farm in Lempster may help those in Vermont who are struggling with the issue.