

IN THE NEWS...

Resistance from Farmers

Complaints about wind farms from Wisconsin farmers have recently appeared via the Potato and Vegetable Growers Association, who are concerned that the wind farms may prevent potato and bean farmers from using airplanes to apply pesticides to their fields. The group seeks the development of a compensation system in the event that farmers experience losses. However, wind farm developers fear that it could force them to develop projects out of state, leading to the loss of growth opportunities for Wisconsin.

A Web Made of Wind

Congratulations to one of the largest web hosting companies in the world, Dotster.com, for their recent announcement that they are powering over 4.4 million websites solely through wind energy! They have also reduced power usage in their own office, as well as eliminating paper products and offsetting 100% of the carbon dioxide emissions created by their employees' yearly commutes. Further, they donate or recycle their used electronics and computers.

European Difficulties for Vestas

Vestas recently announced its intention to cut 3,000 jobs from its global workforce, including a third of the workers in its native Denmark. However, its US expansion has created approximately 3,000 jobs here. Vestas's chief executive, Ditlev Engel, blames competition from China for its European troubles.

School District Defies Law

Even though Indiana state law restricts the investments that local government bodies can make, the New Albany-Floyd County School district continues to plan for potential inclusion in a 25-turbine wind park, with the intention of selling the generated wind power. Timothy Thoman, the president of Performance Services, the company which plans to build the park, contends that the park will not be an investment, because the school district will use the energy to offset its own energy cost, and tie it in to their academic programs. The district will make its final decision this month whether to build five turbines in the park.

Things You Should Know:

SPECIAL EDITION: Condition Surveys – PASER Ratings Part II

Due to the popularity of our last article about the PASER road rating system, we have decided to further expand this topic. While our last article focused on rating asphalt roads, this one discusses gravel roads.

Based on our discussions with contractors in the wind farm industry, we understand it is common for post-construction public roadway improvement costs to exceed \$150,000 and they can occasionally run as high as \$2 million! Many of these public roadways have gravel surfaces and have mixed uses varying from urban areas to recreational and agricultural areas, all of which have variable traffic patterns. Unfortunately, by their very nature, gravel roads generally do not hold up as well or dependably under traffic as paved roads.

As with asphalt or concrete roads, utilizing an objective condition survey system is key to determining a post-construction repair plan that is fair for both the contractor and the county highway departments. However, assessing gravel roads can be more difficult because their conditions can change drastically in a very short period from weather, heavy traffic, or maintenance work. Therefore, condition surveys for gravel roads focus on overall, major factors (such as gravel thickness, lateral drainage and general roadway cross-section) rather than the surface conditions in detail.

For more detailed information regarding the gravel PASER system or for a quote for condition surveys, please contact one of our construction materials engineers.