

With two wind energy projects coming online in February, the Municipal Energy Agency of Nebraska (MEAN) increased its wind energy nameplate capacity from approximately 3 percent to nearly 6 percent of its total power supply capacity.

MEAN is the wholesale power supplier to 65 communities in Colorado, Iowa, Nebraska and Wyoming and one joint action agency. It is one of four energy-related organizations of NMPP Energy.

Imperial is among the participating communities in support of the increased wind power to serve MEAN customers.

MEAN added 18 megawatts to its renewable wind resource pool with two power purchase agreements. It added 10 megawatts from the Wessington Springs Wind Farm in South Dakota and eight megawatts from the Elkhorn Ridge wind project in northeast Nebraska.

Wessington Springs is a 51-megawatt project with 34, 1.5 megawatt turbines. It is owned and operated by a partnership of Heartland Consumers Power District, a public power utility based in Madison, S.D., and the developer, Babcock and Brown.

The Elkhorn Ridge project is an 80-megawatt wind farm near Bloomfield, Neb. It is structured as a Community-Based Energy Development (C-BED) project and is owned and operated by Edison Mission Group, with 33 percent ownership belonging to Nebraska residents.

These two projects bring MEAN's total nameplate capacity of wind generated energy to 35.5 megawatts, enough to power more than 10,000 homes.

MEAN also receives seven megawatts from the Nebraska Public Power District's Ainsworth Wind Farm and 10.5 megawatts from the MEAN Wind Project at Kimball, which was the first utility-scale wind farm in Nebraska when it went online in the fall of 2002.

"Public utilities today have to juggle being reliable, low cost and environmentally responsible," said J. Gary Stauffer, executive director of MEAN.

"Seeking additional renewable wind resources is something our members are interested in and makes good sense for us as a wholesale power supplier," he said.