



Tawanda Kanhema/Index

Left: Adair County engineers attempt to tow a truck stuck on a water damaged section of Orrick Trail. Right: Roads and Bridges Department Supervisor Jami Sevits inspects a section of Missouri Trail.

## Budget, weather delay road repair

### Price to repair Adair County roads is still uncertain

BY TAWANDA KANHEMA  
Staff Reporter

Several sections of Adair County's 680-mile network of gravel and dirt roads require urgent attention following two consecutive years of floods and record-high snowfalls that have rendered some sections impassable.

Adair County Commissioner Gary Jones said this week that the county is facing an uphill task in raising funds required for the work following a reduction in budget allocations.

The Missouri state government cut Adair County's budget allocation for 2010 by \$98,000 due to the decline in state revenues.

"We're kind of between a rock and a hard surface right now," Jones said. "There is not a whole lot we can do. ... Due to the wet conditions, we cannot run rocks because they will just sink in mud."

County engineers had planned to spread 100 tons of gravel on every mile of county roads north of Highway 6 next to Kirksville Country Club. However, with rising rock and fuel prices, the county is looking for more public input.

Jami Sevits, supervisor of Adair County's Roads and Bridges Department, said rising input costs and wet conditions have delayed maintenance work and increased the cost of the county's annual road rehabilitation.

"At this point, it is difficult to tell how much money we will need for road maintenance," Sevits said.

"For gravel alone, we are looking [at] \$241,000. That's how much it will cost before we look at the water situation, because there are drainage issues as well."

Sevits said rock prices had increased by 70 percent since 2002, while the annual cost of fuel for road maintenance work had increased from \$60,000 in 2002 to \$162,000 by the end of December 2009.

The increases have not been matched by increases in property taxes and revenues from fuel levies, leaving the county with less funding. Missouri has a fixed fuel tax rate of 17 cents per gallon.

"We get revenues from county property tax and fuel tax, and neither of them has gone up," Sevits said. "When fuel prices went up, the fuel tax did not go up and most people cut on consumption. That

cut the percentage we would receive from the state in taxes, and it has made a world of difference."

Residents of Adair County often contribute by buying gravel to cover their sections of the road. Sevits said not enough residents have come forth and bought gravel for their sections of the road.

"With a little public assistance, we will be able to save the roads, and they would not fall apart," Sevits said. "We are trying to maintain the roads so we can keep them open, otherwise we would have to close some of them."

Work on most water damaged sections of the roads is expected to begin in April, when the wet conditions have cleared in most parts.

Besides funding shortages, the cost of maintaining equipment is draining the county's resources.

"We have not upgraded our equip-

ment since 2006," Sevits said. "Most of the warranties have expired, and the county is now paying cash for repairs. Our equipment is beginning to show a toll of how things have been going."

Some residents have been buying gravel since the end of the winter season, and a number of roads in Adair are in fairly good condition compared to sections of Orrick Trail, which extends out of city limits from Missouri Street.

Ricky Greenstreet, who lives at Young's Town Trail in Thousand Hills State Park, teamed up with his neighbors and bought rocks to save their road from degenerating into a pool of muck.

"Every two years or so, we spend \$500 to \$600 on rocks just when the roads need it," Greenstreet said. "We have no money, but we've got to save this, otherwise we have no roads."

## Adair adopts wind energy

BY ELIZABETH KOCH  
Staff Reporter

The prairie landscape between Adair and Sullivan counties might change to a countryside of energy-producing wind turbines.

"The Shuteye Creek Wind Project is located about 20 miles east of Kirksville," according to the TradeWind Energy Web site. The project covers 36,000 acres and involves 60 landowners.

This location was chosen because "Shuteye Creek is believed to be the most energetic site of any wind project in development in the eastern half of Missouri," according to the site.

The turbine project will cover about 2 percent of the land, while the remaining 30,000 acres will remain farmed as they were prior to the project, according to the site.

"The project (Phase I and Phase II) will offset approximately 900,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year, 3,000 tons of nitrogen oxide per year and 4,000 tons of sulfur dioxide per year," according to the site. "This will be one of the largest wind projects in Missouri, producing enough

power for about 90,000 Missouri households."

Mark Thompson, second district Adair County commissioner, said the primary reason for an Enhanced Enterprise Zone is for economic development and to allow tax abatement to specific manufacturing businesses in the area.

An EEZ differs from an Enterprise Zone because it covers more area, he said.

"An Enhanced Enterprise Zone is a territory within the county ... that would allow certain industries to come into our county to receive a 50 percent tax abatement for up to 10 years," he said.

The EEZ Board is comprised of seven actively involved community members, he said. The Board researched the project and went through the application process. Its proposal was approved to advance after a public hearing March 9 in the Adair County Annex, he said. The approved proposal will allow the construction of wind turbines. The number of turbines is still undetermined, but could be approximately 100-200, he said.

"The Enhanced Enterprise Zone paperwork is due to us any time, due into the Adair

The Project (Phase I and Phase II) will offset approximately:

3,000 tons of NOx per year

900,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year

4000 tons of SO2 per year

producing enough power for about 90,000 Missouri households

Design by Cameron Ballentine and Antonette Bedessie/Index

County's Commissioner's office for our approval, and then we will submit it to the Missouri State Department of Economic Development," Thompson said. "The process will then be expedited, and should happen within the next month and a half.

TradeWind Energy initiated the project and is the company that will be working with Adair and Sullivan counties to complete the project, he said. TradeWind will receive a 60 percent tax abatement for 20 years, he said.

"Their [TradeWind Energy] tax income to the county is going to be well over a million dollars every year, and that's with a 60 percent tax abatement," Thompson said.

Approximately 76 percent of the taxes generated by the turbines will go to the school districts, he said. The Novinger

school district will have the biggest share of the revenue because the majority of the megawatts would be produced in that district, he said. The Brashear district will not obtain any revenue from the production of electricity, but will receive funds from the infrastructure's property tax, he said.

Kirksville schools would receive a small amount of money from the turbines, and other revenue will be used for other entities, he said.

Thompson said there would not be added expenses to Adair County with construction, he said. The construction of the turbines will provide more than 300 jobs, boosting the local economy, he said. The construction phase will not last longer than one year, he said.

"The motels are going to potentially be full here, the

restaurants feeding an extra 300 people are going to be the recipient of considerable benefits," Thompson said. "So it's going to be a real win-win situation for Adair County."

A disadvantage of the EEZ construction is the abatement selection process, he said. New businesses might have the opportunity to receive this abatement, while older standing businesses did not, bringing up the question of equality, he said.

"The county can select what industries and how much [tax abatement] they are going to receive," Thompson said.

Peter Goldman, professor emeritus of biology, said TradeWind probably chose the location for the turbines because it does not have forests. Goldman said it would be reasonably easy to connect to the power lines from the area as well. Receiving a rental fee for a turbine might have a great economic influence on farmers, he said.

This region is also known as the Mystic Conservation Opportunity Area. Farmers mostly use the land for hay fields and pastures, he said. Tall grass prairie plants once covered the area, he said.

"It would be nice if a farmer were to manage his or her property in a conservation manner ... We could compensate them for their losses, but I don't think that's the case," Goldman said.

The turbines might cause harm to the greater prairie chicken, a very rare bird in Missouri, of which there still are populations in the Adair and Sullivan county area, Goldman said.

"The Missouri Department of Conservation initiated a reintroduction program in this region 10 years ago or so," he said. "And what people have discovered is that prairie chickens and windmills don't mix. What otherwise is a suitable habitat becomes instantly unsuitable."

Although the turbines might be a good source of green energy, they also are taking away a natural habitat from a bird on its way to possible extinction, he said. A solution might be to construct the turbines elsewhere, considering the prairie chicken's habitat is probably rarer than land where turbines could be built and succeed.

Improperly placed turbines also have been shown to kill migratory birds, he said.

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