

#8- Dances with Windmills

(Note: the Rosebud wind turbine was a demonstration project of the Environmental Justice Interagency Working Group Native Task Force a couple years ago. You can read about it and other EJ Projects at:
<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/0/e05d25e7fe65633385256d1a006d6a3a?OpenDocument>

You can also get more information about it, and the new Three Affiliated Tribes (MHA Nation) project at this website:

<http://www.nativeenergy.com/wind-farms.html>
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Native Americans and energy
Dancing with windmills
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Indians look to the winds for cash

THE Mohave Generating Station in southern Nevada is not one of America's prettier energy sources. It has continuously exceeded pollution limits and the federal government has told its operator, Southern California Edison (SCE), that it must be refurbished by the end of this year, or else closed. Yet this deeply unlovely plant is vitally important to the Hopi and Navajo tribes. Closing the station would deprive both tribes of free energy and a lot of money. It generates one-third of the Hopi tribe's revenue.

Nowadays, most people suppose that Indian reservations draw most of their money from casinos. But power plants have been a steady source of income for many tribes. In 2004, some \$400m of oil, gas and coal royalties was split between 41 tribes. One gas-rich tribe, the Southern Ute in Colorado, claims some \$1 billion in assets (though that also includes a casino). The problem is that many of the facilities are polluters and need modernizing.

Mohave is fairly typical. The main difficulty has to do with water, which is especially needed to transport the coal, via a slurry pipeline. One source, a local aquifer, will be restricted. The other, the Colorado river, is governed by a deal that runs out in 2026. The tribes and SCE are trying to work out a temporary deal to keep the plant open. But in the longer term they are also considering making Mohave a more verdant facility, perhaps even eventually shifting over to solar or wind projects.

The Hopi are not the only tribe thinking of going green. Outside San Diego, the Kumeyaay tribe on the Campo Reservation is involved in an \$80m wind project: its 25 turbines should bring power to 50,000 homes in San Diego County within a few weeks. The tribe had to go into partnership with a Texan company, Superior Renewable Energy, because, as a sovereign nation, it could not receive the production-tax credit which is the main government bribe to set up wind projects.

So far, the only native-owned wind turbine up and running is the Rosebud Sioux project in South Dakota, which generates 750KW and sells some of the excess power to Ellsworth air force base (recently saved from closure). To build it the tribe needed federal grants and a windfall from an alternative energy marketer, NativeEnergy, which bought upfront all the "green tag" credits that can be traded on the commodities market so that companies without access to clean energy can offset their dirty energy consumption. NativeEnergy then sold the tags to the likes of Ben & Jerry's and the Dave Matthews Band.

The Department of Energy has set aside \$2.5m for 18 tribes for renewable technologies. The new energy bill has also created an \$800m bond programme which is supposed to give the tribes parity with private-sector borrowers. But, even with government help, it looks like a long haul.

http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story_id=S%27%28H%28%24PQ7%20%20P%22%3C%0A&CFID=69362722&CFTOKEN=3bec0fc-39bf40c8-720f-43f9-b636-6a50b9ab3f47&tranMode=none