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### **Berkshire Wind Project bonds get A-level ratings; operation set for mid-February**

BOSTON, Mass. – December 3, 2010 – The Berkshire Wind Power Cooperative Corporation (BWPCC) has received A-level credit ratings on approximately \$66 million in bonds it plans to issue to finance its Berkshire Wind Power Project, the largest wind project to-date in Massachusetts.

The 10-turbine, 15-megawatt project, located on Brodie Mountain in Hancock, Mass., is scheduled to begin operation in mid-February 2011. All 10 turbines are fully erected and remaining construction work will be completed in approximately two months.

The project's bond issue, expected to close later this month, recently received an A credit rating from Fitch Ratings and an A-minus rating from Standard & Poor's Corporation.

"This is an exciting project for many different reasons," said BWPCC President H. Bradford White, manager of the West Boylston Municipal Lighting Plant. "In addition to being an important source of power for 14 municipal utilities, it embodies the broader environmental and economic benefits of renewable energy development, consistent with the clean energy goals of the Commonwealth and nation," he said.

The BWPCC is comprised of 14 Massachusetts municipal utilities and the Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (MMWEC). Project construction resumed in mid-October after being suspended for nearly a year due to legal issues that have been resolved.

Operation of the project will nearly double the state's current 18.5 megawatts in wind power resources, which include more than 20 comparatively small projects ranging in size from 100 kilowatts to the 3-megawatt Princeton Municipal Light Department project, according to the state Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs web site.

Although the BWPCC utilities are exempt from the Massachusetts renewable portfolio standard, they are pursuing renewable energy projects that make energy and economic sense for their customers. According to Fitch Ratings, the Berkshire Wind Power Project reflects an alignment with Massachusetts renewable energy standards "and many municipal light departments in the Commonwealth have embraced renewable initiatives that will not materially affect their rates."

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Wind speeds atop Brodie Mountain, one of the best inland wind sites in Massachusetts, average about 8 meters/second, making it a Class 6 wind resource on an American Wind Energy Association scale of 1 to 7. The BWPCC project is expected to operate at a capacity factor of approximately 40 percent and produce more than 52,500 megawatt hours of electricity a year, enough to power approximately 6,000 homes.

The BWPCC bond issue is expected to include approximately \$55 million in Build America Bonds and approximately \$11 million in traditional, tax-exempt bonds. All of the BWPCC members are non-profit, tax-exempt public power entities.

“The Cooperative and its members are making a major commitment to provide their customers with an economic source of renewable energy that will diversify our power supplies and help to stabilize prices by curbing our reliance on fossil fuels to generate electricity,” White said.

According to BWPCC, the equivalent of approximately 50 full-time jobs have been created during the construction period, including work for a number of Western Massachusetts construction, engineering and manufacturing firms. The project will offset the production of nearly 612,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide and the use of 1.7 million barrels of oil.

The municipal utility members of the BWPCC are based in the communities of Ashburnham, Boylston, Groton, Holden, Hull, Ipswich, Marblehead, Paxton, Peabody, Shrewsbury, Sterling, Templeton, Wakefield and West Boylston. All provide electricity at retail to their customers. MMWEC is a non-profit, public corporation and political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that provides a wide range of power supply, financial, risk management and other services to the municipal utilities.