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RON LITZINGER (left), chief executive officer of Edison Mission Group, hands Gov. Dave Heineman a shovel, and Ron Asche, president and chief executive officer of Nebraska Public Power District, receives a shovel from Mike Donahue, executive vice president of Midwest Wind Energy, during a ceremony Wednesday celebrating the start of construction on the Laredo Ridge Wind Farm near Petersburg.

Wind farm construction under way at Petersburg

By **KATHRYN HARRIS**
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PETERSBURG — Hold on to your hats.

An accelerated era of wind energy development began Wednesday afternoon in Petersburg when more than 100 people — including state officials and community leaders — breezed into town to celebrate the start of construction on the Laredo Ridge Wind Energy project.

Among those attending the event at Werner Hall here were Gov. Dave Heineman, state Sens. Mike Flood of

Norfolk and Kate Sullivan of Cedar Rapids, Ron Asche, who is president of the Nebraska Public Power District, and Ron Litzinger, chief executive officer of Edison Mission Group, which owns the wind farm.

“Wind development is very important to our state, especially rural Nebraska,” Heineman said.

Heineman said Nebraska recently has made significant advances in wind energy legislation and regulations that cover a range of issues. For example, passage earlier this year of Legislative Bill 1048 — designed to

to encourage development of large, privately owned wind farms that would export power to other states without harming the public power utilities in Nebraska — marked the beginning of accelerated wind energy development in the state.

Heineman called Laredo Ridge, which is located about three miles northeast of Petersburg, a huge investment that will help show that the state is on the move in wind energy development.

The project — a \$200 million investment —
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Educational research center proposed

By **KATHRYN HARRIS**
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PETERSBURG — With new projects come new opportunities.

Cory Worrell, superintendent of Boone Central School District, wants students in his area of the state to benefit from those opportunities.

That’s why, during the

Wednesday ceremony that marked the start of construction on Laredo Ridge Wind Farm near Petersburg, Worrell announced a proposal that would help Boone County residents take advantage of those opportunities.

The Petersburg Educational-Economic Business Center would be an educational re-

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“One of the things, as a school district, we’re excited about is not only these wind towers bringing additional revenue to our school district, but we also can see the education benefit it has for our students.”

SUPERINTENDENT CORY WORRELL
BOONE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT



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A CROWD of more than 100 people gathered at Werner Hall in Petersburg on Wednesday to celebrate the start of construction on the Laredo Ridge Wind Farm in Boone County.

Wind

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vestment — will support about 170 construction jobs. It also will pay nearly \$6 million in taxes and fees to the local and state economy over the next 20 years.

“What that really means is jobs,” Heineman said.

Heineman said he expects Nebraska to be a top-10 wind-energy producing state within the next 10 years.

Once completed, more than 80 megawatts of renewable energy — enough to power about 26,000 homes — will be produced at Laredo Ridge. The electricity will be sold under a 20-year purchase agreement to NPPD.

“The partners involved in the project were the first to develop a joint venture between a public entity and a private sector in our state in 2008,” Heineman said in reference to the collaboration between Edison Mission, NPPD and Midwest Wind Energy,

which developed the project.

The entities joined forces to construct the Elkhorn Ridge project near Bloomfield. Construction there began in 2008, and it has been producing power for more than a year. The entities also are currently finalizing contracts to build a third wind farm near Broken Bow in Custer County.

Asche said the NPPD board of directors had established a goal of having 10 percent of its customers’ energy needs met by new, renewable energy resources by 2020.

With the combination of its Ainsworth wind farm, Elkhorn Ridge and Laredo Ridge, officials at NPPD expect it will meet about 4 percent of its customers needs from renewable energy sources next year.

Asche said he expects the Petersburg wind farm to be operation by the end of 2010.