

American Wind storms its way into Sweetwater

KIMBERLY GRAY Special to the Reporter-News

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American Wind Capital will host an open house Thursday for its new office in Sweetwater, a fitting location for the city that considers itself at the forefront of the wind industry.

American Wind Capital, a financial services company, specializes in wind royalty acquisition. Thursday's open house will begin at 11 a.m. at E. Third Street, Suite E. For more information, call 325-455-1057, or visit the Web site at www.americanwindcapital.com.

The primary goal of the company is to give landowners "immediate financial funding and security," according to Maria Klutey, formerly with GE Energy Financial Services. She now works as the chief financial officer for American Wind Capital. "This is a great way to use money today instead of waiting for 10 or 15 years," she said.

Basically, this company gives options to landowners who have wind turbines on their land. If a landowner is in need of cash, instead of waiting for annual royalties from wind developers on the turbines located on their land, that landowner can give American Wind Capital the authority to take over that agreement with the wind developer. Then the landowner may receive a large payout from American Wind Capital, based on the previous agreement with the wind developer.

Lauren Gray, the regional manager and associate general counsel for American Wind Capital, says her company "offers payment structures that help landowners effectively manage and diversify the royalty income currently paid to them by wind development companies." She also pointed out that their model reduces the landowners' exposure to risks related to wind turbines and wind projects, such as nonperformance, equipment failure, regulatory changes, and project owner financial difficulties. Each of these issues can impact a landowner's royalty payments.

Gray added that some practical ways landowners can benefit from the payment structures offered by American Wind Capital include paying of debts, purchasing new farm equipment, paying for children's college tuition, and fulfilling other financial obligations.

Wind royalty acquisition is a newer aspect of the wind industry since the wind industry

itself is still fairly new. Klutey defines it as a “different piece” of the industry.

However, American Wind Capital boasts experience in the industry overall. American Wind Capital founder and CEO Charles Hinckley, along with Senior Vice President Andrew Hinckley, and Managing Director John Quirke, run the Connecticut-based company and have experience in the industry. They are formerly with Noble Environmental Power, a wind developing company.

American Wind Capital is backed financially by Barclays Capital and Natural Gas Partners. American Wind Capital describes Barclays Capital as the largest investment bank in the world, and Natural Gas Partners is an energy investor.

Gray, who works in the local Sweetwater office, formerly worked for Horizon Wind Energy.

The company also employs locals who are familiar with the area, like Kati Bewley, a Sweetwater native and manager of the local office. She pointed out that her company has already become active within the community and plans to do more. The company is a member of the Sweetwater Chamber of Commerce, West Texas Wind Energy Clearinghouse (also located in Sweetwater), a platinum member of the Roscoe Wind Council, and a sponsor of a local girls’ youth basketball team that named itself “Turbulence.”



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