



Notes from the Chief

What I'm working on for You

Osiyo -

At Cherokee National Holiday this year, I spoke of a renewed effort for Cherokees to become stewards of our land. To advance that effort, I appointed the first ever secretary of natural resources. We also established the Cherokee Nation Fish and Wildlife Association. Now, we've expanded that effort into another arena: clean energy.

The Cherokee Nation owns about 4,000 acres of agricultural pastureland around the site of the former Chilocco Indian boarding school near Newkirk in Kay County in north central Oklahoma. After more than 10 years of studying the feasibility and environmental impact of such a project, the Tribal Council approved a lease of that tribal trust land to wind farm developer PNE Wind to develop a wind farm and help lessen the country's dependence on fossil fuels.

A wind farm isn't just good for the environment and for the United States as a whole. It will come at a great benefit to Cherokee people by bringing in a considerable amount of new revenue for the Cherokee Nation. Our ground lease agreement with PNE Wind will generate about \$1 million per year, on average, for tribal programs and services over the life of the lease. This is a much-needed boost for our tribal programs, as we always try to stretch every dollar as far as it will go to help Cherokee Nation citizens.

The development of a wind farm is a great step toward advancing clean energy and moving away from coal-fired power. This is what it means to be stewards of our land. Wind energy is pollution free, doesn't require fuel or water, and the land beneath the wind farm will still be used for agricultural purposes. Currently, we collect lease payments from farmers and ranchers who run cattle on that pastureland, so this project will help us collect lease payments for both operations. PNE Wind is also obligated to restore the land to its present condition should the company ever cease operations.

Chilocco Indian School operated from 1884 to 1980. The Cherokee Nation and several other tribes have owned parcels of land in the area since the 1980s, and there has been much discussion over the years

about how to best utilize those parcels. After careful thought and consideration about the environmental impacts, and what is best for the Cherokee Nation operationally, the current agreement is by far the best scenario. This agreement brings us in line with other tribes in the area to develop a project that is profitable for all involved, while maintaining the integrity of the land.

I am proud the Cherokee Nation is part of the clean energy movement sweeping our country, and I applaud the Tribal Council for agreeing it is in the best interest of our tribal people, and for future generations, to explore energy options that leave our land, our water and our air in better condition than we found them.

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