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Ground broken for big wind-energy project in California's Mojave Desert

By Associated Press

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MOJAVE, Calif. (AP) — Renewable energy developers broke ground Tuesday for a major expansion of wind-power generation in the Mojave Desert north of Los Angeles.

The Alta Wind Energy Center is planned as the world's largest wind project, with nearly 600 turbines capable of producing 1,550 megawatts of electricity when completed, with the potential to be doubled, according to developer Terra-Gen Power LLC of New York City.

The currently funded first five phases will produce 720 megawatts, according to a company statement.

Financing for the initial phases totaled \$1.6 billion, the company said.

The project is being developed in a region already studded with turbines that use the energy of winds sweeping across the Tehachapi Mountains to produce electricity.

Southern California Edison, which has contracted to buy 1,550 megawatts from Alta Wind, recently completed the first phase of a huge transmission system to carry electricity from renewable energy sources in the Mojave Desert to the Los Angeles region.

The groundbreaking comes two years after Terra-Gen Power and ArcLight Capital Partners LLC purchased Tehachapi-area wind farm assets from Allco Finance Group Ltd. of Sydney, Australia, for \$325 million. Allco, which was restructuring after problems stemming from the global credit crunch, had negotiated the power deal with SoCal Edison in 2006.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger hailed the Terra-Gen Power project in a statement.

"Having the world's largest wind project break ground in our state is tangible evidence that our pioneering policies are drawing investment, improving the economy and creating jobs now when we need them most," he said.

Last week, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power commissioners approved a long-term pact for more than 100 megawatts from an expansion of the Milford Wind Farm in Utah. The deal requires City Council approval. The DWP already receives 185 megawatts from the original 200-megawatt Milford

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