



Courtesy: The Gear Works Seattle Inc.

Winding up: The Gear Works Seattle's turbine gear repair service is growing as fast as U.S. installed wind capacity.

## 'Sky's the limit' on wind energy business, manufacturer says

[SEATTLE]

Wind-produced energy constitutes less than 1 percent of the electricity generated in the United States today, but the installed capacity of wind projects has been growing at a gale-force pace of more than 20 percent in recent years. By 2020, the American Wind Energy Association expects wind will provide at least 6 percent of the nation's electricity. Utility-scale wind turbines are driving much of this growth, and one Seattle company stands at the ready with spare parts and wrenches.

In just a few years' time, The Gear Works

Seattle Inc. has built a thriving cottage industry repairing and building parts for wind turbine gear boxes — the workhorse mechanisms that transmit power from blades to generators.

"Wind was barely on our radar screen in 2000; now it's 20 percent of our business," said Gear Works' Vice President Sterling Ramberg, whose 58-year-old company also makes and repairs gear box parts for mining, paper production and other industries. "Wind has provided the biggest growth of gear boxes, industry-wide."

A typical turbine gear box has an optimal life-span of a decade, Ramberg said. But strong or sporadic wind gusts often take their toll on gear boxes before then. In any given year, Gear Works fixes about 60 wind gear boxes at its more than 100,000-square-foot factory complex in southwest Seattle.

"You could have a gust of wind that's off the charts," he added. "It's a punishing application."

In addition to repairing gear boxes, the company makes parts for manufacturers and end users. Most of the company's parts are used in California, which produces about a third of the nation's wind energy (more than 2,000 megawatts of installed capacity). But Ramberg said he sees increasing potential for more parts and repair orders from across the country.

"The sky's the limit," he added.

## Wal-Mart to offset big-box footprint

[WASHINGTON D.C.]

Wal-Mart's average store size approaches 150,000 square feet — that's a national footprint of about 138,000 football fields.

Now the store that builds big has pledged to "offset" each acre it develops with an acre of wildlife habitat conservation land.

In partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), Wal-Mart (NYSE: WMT) has pledged \$35 million over the next 10 years to conserve open lands for wildlife.

"This is not a mitigation program," said John Berry, executive director of NFWF. "There will always be growth, and that's good, to maintain our quality of living. The question is how do you manage that to make space for wildlife?"

Thus far, NFWF has funded five conservation projects around the country, including a 1,120-acre ranch in Deschutes County, Ore.

The ranch, Berry explained, is in a prime development region in the fastest-growing county in the state. It is also a wildlife corridor between two other undeveloped parcels, one managed by the U.S. Forest Service, the other by the Bureau of Land Management.

The five projects protect a total of 321,000 acres, Berry said, and ended in a price tag of about \$8 million.

"That means I've still got 75 percent of the money to give away," he said.

### FAST★FACTS

Wal-Mart Supercenters nationwide:  
**1,471**

Wal-Mart Discount stores nationwide:  
**1,478**

Fiscal year 2004 sales:  
**\$256.3 billion**

Average Supercenter size:  
**150,000 square feet**

2005 forecast:  
**50 million square feet new retail space**



SOURCE: BizStats.com, Wal-Mart

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## Step back for Natural Step U.S.

[SAN FRANCISCO]

Karl-Henrik Robert's organization The Natural Step (TNS), perhaps the godfather of many corporations' pursuit of sustainability, is scaling back its U.S. presence.

In a March letter to donors and friends, Catherine Gray, longtime president of TNS' operations nationally, said the San Francisco headquarters scaled back in order to go through a "strategic planning process" with consulting firm Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu.

Gray's letter listed some large companies such as Nike (NYSE: NKE) and Starbucks (Nasdaq: SBUX) applying TNS' framework for moving a business to sustainability. But the "transformative work" TNS fosters inside companies takes two to three years, Gray's letter said, and fees from the work have "not added up to a sustainable long term business model."

Gray said the current political landscape and changing needs of the sustainable business community also prompted TNS to assess its role. Using a grant from the Heinz Endowment that

the organization received in late 2004, both the international and national divisions of TNS will put other activities on hold "until the direction for the next ten years is firmly set."

Regina Hauser, executive director of the Oregon Natural Step Network (ORTNS), was quick to say TNS' process won't affect ORTNS, which is an independent organization licensing use of the name.

"We are alive and kicking," Hauser said. "We're going to continue to pursue our mission of getting companies to take responsibility by showing them great examples of how to do that."

## Agriculture book lauds local efforts

[PORTLAND]

Iowa did it. So did Minnesota. Now Washington is about to get a coffee-table-style book profiling 43 major farming, forestry, ranching, and salmon restoration innovators in the state.

"Renewing the Countryside" is 172 pages of stories and 150 pages of full-color photographs about some of the people and processes moving sustainable agriculture forward in the region.



John Harrington of Portland-based Sustainable Northwest, the book's editor, said it is aimed at both urban dwellers who may not get

enough in the mainstream press about farmers' and ranchers' land stewardship efforts, as well as at rural communities that need to hear regional success stories.

"We want to highlight and raise awareness of the people bringing economic integrity to rural communities," Harrington said. "[The book] is also making the case that we can't just lock everything up — rural-based land managers are a key for sustainability going forward."

The book makes clear the ways different regions in Washington have made different advances. In the Palouse Valley, for example, dryland farmers have embraced conservation tillage, while in the Walla Walla region a group of wineries are figuring out how to grow grapes effectively and ecologically. In the Skagit Valley,

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