

Pittsburgh Commitment

Background

In his Advanced Energy Initiative released in February 2006, President Bush described his vision of changing the way we power our homes and businesses by increasing energy efficiency, alleviating price pressures on natural gas, and fostering alternatives for power production, including wind energy. In doing so, he declared that areas of the nation with good wind resources could provide 20 percent of total U.S. electricity demand.

Wind is an abundant and free domestic energy resource. Coupled with modern technology, it displaces the need for fossil generation and reduces U.S. dependence on imported energy. At the same time, it delivers cost-competitive electricity and environmental and economic benefits to the American people.

Commitment

The U.S. Department of Energy, National Renewable Energy Laboratory, and the American Wind Energy Association will collaborate to develop an action plan to realize the President's vision. This plan will include specific recommendations that, when implemented, will lead to a vastly increased role for wind energy in U.S. electricity supply.

The action plan will incorporate input from key stakeholders, including environmental groups, utilities, policy planners, investors, educators, communities, and others and will be made public during the WINDPOWER 2007 Conference and Exhibition in Los Angeles, Calif.

Why Wind Energy?

Large-scale wind is feasible – In recent years, grid studies focused on the feasibility of integrating greater amounts of renewable energy into New York, Minnesota, and Germany's grid systems have provided insight and established confidence in the goal to supply up to 20% of America's electricity from wind. Currently, the California Energy Commission and California Independent System Operator are also studying the limits of existing systems to absorb up to 33% renewable energy in California.

Wind is cost competitive. Wind energy generation is competitive with new conventional energy generation plants. Today, electricity production over the life of a given wind plant can be reliably predicted, providing an effective hedge against fossil fuel price volatility. Wind energy also provides a positive net energy pay-back in about 3-6 months.

Wind is environmentally sound – Wind energy creates no emissions. Using only America's free, abundant winds as fuel, every 1000 megawatt-hours of wind generation avoids about 600 tons of CO₂ emissions.

The wind resource exists – U.S. DOE studies indicate that many of the world's most abundant wind resources reside in the United States. Some exist in the Eastern and Western mountains off of the Atlantic coast and surrounding the Great Lakes. Most,

however, can be found in rural, less populated areas like the Great Plains which reach from Texas into Canada. According to DOE, a fraction of this land could easily supply 20% of the nation's electricity needs. At the same time, since wind energy uses only a small footprint, the same land can continue to be used for ranching and/or farming activities, increasing local economic development.

Wind energy is secure – As an abundant, indigenous energy resource, wind power generation reduces the need for fossil fuel imports, expanding our nation's domestic prosperity. Wind energy can also provide significant economic revitalization to the nation's rural areas since investment in local wind plants creates jobs. According to AWEA, 22 man-years of employment are created for every megawatt of wind turbines manufactured, installed, or serviced.

Wind technology continues to advance – Wind energy is a good value today. Next generation wind technology, however, will further reduce the cost of wind energy, provide seamless integration with electricity grid operations, and enable powerful offshore wind turbines to be deployed which can supply major coastal load centers. Federal research and development investment will assure the availability of advanced wind energy technology necessary to meet our nation's needs moving forward.

Wind is part of the solution - The nation is best served with a balanced energy portfolio. As the United States moves toward a clean energy future, an integrated portfolio approach, including renewables and wind, will become increasingly important. Domestic renewables can provide a significant portion of the U.S. energy supply, augmenting the existing fossil fuel infrastructure. Wind is the first utility-scale renewable to become economically competitive. Solar, geothermal, and biomass are following with significant development expected to occur in the next decade.

Wind energy generation is a public benefit - Public awareness of the potential for wind and renewable energy is crucial. Stable government policy will be required to make substantive progress - particularly to ensure fair competition for new alternatives and to establish market-based pricing. Achieving 20% of the nation's electricity from wind will make a significant impact in the areas of lower natural gas prices, environmental emissions, energy security, import deficit reduction, and investment in U.S.-based jobs.

The Vision

Wind power is proven – it can provide a significant contribution toward meeting large-scale electricity needs. With America's volatile fuel pricing and growing environmental concerns, now is the time to tap into our nation's abundant wind energy resource--now is the time for us all to commit to the realization of this goal.