

Watt's New? Michigan Energy News - September 2012

Article By:

Energy Practice Group

DTE Energy Obtains Approval of Echo Wind Park

In mid-August **DTE Energy** applied for ex parte approval of its newest wind energy farm. The Echo Wind Park, to be constructed in Chandler, Oliver, and McKinley townships in Huron County, will be approximately 110 MW in size, will use GE wind turbines, and will be constructed by Barton Malow Company under an EPC Agreement. Commercial operation is expected by December 31, 2013. The project is estimated to have a net capacity factor of 47 percent. The cost recovery sought in the application included Detroit Edison's authorized rate of return on equity of 11 percent. The application was approved on September 11.

Rooftop Solar Cost Reductions

Cascade Renewable Energy of Grand Rapids is developing an injection-molded plastic solar photovoltaic rocking system for flat roof installations. Using a DOE Sun Shot grant, it has produced a full-scale prototype with the goal of reducing balance-of-system costs by 25 percent. The design reduces mechanical and electrical labor costs, as well as the cost of the structural system itself.

University-Based Bioenergy Research

Since 2006 the **U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Energy** have invested nearly \$70 million to identify key genes affecting biomass yield and quality to improve the efficiency of biofuel production. As part of this Plant Feedstocks Genomics for Bioenergy research program, two Michigan universities were recently awarded grants. Michigan Tech will get \$1.1 million for a project to analyze genetic traits in the poplar species that affect wood biomass yield and quality. Michigan State University will receive \$1.2 million to analyze how switchgrass responds to different environmental stresses such as drought and high levels of salt.

GM Commits to Solar Energy

General Motors has invested \$7.5 million in Sunlogics PLC through its subsidiary General Motors Venture LLC. It also signed agreements with Sunlogics for the installation of solar charging canopies at Chevrolet dealerships and GM facilities. Sunlogics will establish its corporate headquarters and a manufacturing facility in suburban Detroit. GM is constructing a 516 KW solar array at its Detroit-

Electric Rates Increase Following New 2008 Law

In 2008 new Michigan legislation ended an eight-year electric market deregulation and capped the electricity that could be sold competitively at 10 percent. According to a report by Continental Economics of New Mexico, between 2008 and 2012 electric residential rates have increased 47 percent for Consumers Energy residential ratepayers and 28 percent for DTE Energy residential ratepayers. Rates for industrial ratepayers increased 35 percent and 18 percent respectively. These increases occurred at a time when wholesale electric rates in Michigan decreased by 45 percent. DTE and Consumers have responded to the report by explaining the rate increases have paid for environmental improvements and other long-term upgrades.

25x25 is Now Ballot Proposal 3

The 25 percent renewables by 2025 ballot initiative has been given the number “Proposal 3.” The descriptive 96-word ballot language has been set—“This proposal would:

- “Require electric utilities to provide at least 25 percent of their annual retail sales of electricity from renewable energy sources, which are wind, solar, biomass, and hydropower, by 2025.
- “Limit to not more than 1 percent per year electric utility rate increases charged to consumers only to achieve compliance with the renewable energy standard.
- “Allow annual extensions of the deadline to meet the 25 percent standard in order to prevent rate increases over the 1 percent limit.
- “Require the legislature to enact additional laws to encourage the use of Michigan-made equipment and employment of Michigan residents.”

The United Auto Workers Union has endorsed the proposal. The American Wind Energy Association has announced its support. Amway Corporation, Betz Industries, Great Lakes Die Cast, Trendway Corp, and Sunrise Acre Farms have announced their opposition to the ballot proposal. Huron County Board of Commissioners has voted to oppose the proposal.

Michigan Shorts

?? Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association has offered Women of Wind Energy members a 50 percent discount on membership ? ITC Holdings of Novi has initiated the multistate and federal regulatory process to acquire the electric transmission business of Entergy Corp ? Michigan now has more than 1000 net metering customers providing 6166 KW of electric capacity ? We Energy and Wolverine Power Cooperative are studying a plan to keep the coal-fired power plant in Marquette open by upgrading the pollution control equipment ? June data from the GVSU wind buoy in Lake Michigan showed an average wind speed of 22 mph at the 410 foot level ? Duke Energy is developing a wind farm in Reading Township in Hillsdale County ? The \$1 billion set of projects for American Transmission Company to upgrade the Upper Peninsula’s electric grid has been scaled back (for now) by the Midwest ISO to a \$280 million project ? Governor Snyder has issued Executive Order 2012 dissolving the Michigan Next Energy Authority and transferring all functions to the Michigan Strategic Fund Board, which was created by statute to promote the development of alternative energy technologies and provide tax incentives for R&D and manufacture of those technologies ??

Water-Cooled Solar Panels

Power Panel has been selected as one of 2012's innovative building products manufacturers. The Detroit-based solar panel manufacturer circulates water through the solar panel. This design collects thermal energy while actively cooling the PV cells, thus increasing electrical output. The thermal energy can be used for industrial or heating purposes.

Michigan Shines at Solar Show

Normally this is not a gossip column. But my day at Solar Power International in Orlando reminded me that domestic and international manufacturing and entrepreneurial prowess is alive, well, and living in Michigan. Going toe-to-toe with other exhibitors were Patriot Solar, Level One, Stahlin Enclosures, Williams Form Engineering, Guardian Industries, Fronius USA, Envirotronics, DuroLast Roofing, and Solar Street Lights USA. Wandering the show were Cascade Engineering/Renewables, Windemuller Electric, and Shape Corp, Paul Krepps from MEDC, and Joanne Crary from Saginaw Future. All showed that Michigan is in the game, and playing to win.

© 2025 Varnum LLP

National Law Review, Volume II, Number 264

Source URL: <https://natlawreview.com/article/watt-s-new-michigan-energy-news-september-2012>