

Watt's New? Michigan Energy News - September 2013

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Still Getting Ready to Make Good Energy Decisions

After reviewing and analyzing the submissions from seven public forums and from the 114 questions posted on the web for feedback, Energy Office Director Steve Bakkal and MPSC Chairman John Quackenbush will be issuing four reports on the following schedule:

? Renewable Energy: Draft report release for comments – 9/20/13

Due date for public comments – 10/11/13

Release final report – 11/4/13

? Additional Areas: Draft report release for comments – 10/1/13

Due date for public comments – 10/22/13

Release final report – 11/15/13

? Electric Choice: Draft report release for comments – 10/15/13

Due date for public comments – 11/1/13

Release final report – 11/20/13

? Energy Efficiency: Draft report release for comments – 10/22/13

Due date for public comments – 11/6/13

Release final report – 11/26/13

Net Metering Participation Increases

The Michigan Public Service Commission issues an annual report on electric customers participating in the statewide net metering program required under the Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy Act of 2008. [Under net metering, when a customer produces electric energy in excess of its needs, energy is provided back to the serving utility and the customer receives a credit.] In 2012 the size of the net metering program increased 55 percent to 9,583 kW. The number of net metering customers has gone from 53 in 2008 to 1,330 in 2012. While most of the recent increase was due to new solar installations, a 535 kW methane digester in Great Lakes Energy Cooperative's service territory is Michigan's first Category 3 (methane digester up to 550 kW) modified net metering project.

Methane-to-Methanol Plant Operational

Oil wells also produce natural gas. When there is no way to get the natural gas to market it is usually "flared". Now Gas Technologies LLC of Walloon Lake has demonstrated its 25-foot, portable, singlestep, gas-to-liquids plant in a Kalkaska County oil field. This first in the industry process can monetize stranded natural gas, biogas, coal mine methane, and landfill gas. www.gastechno.com

Adopt-A-Watt Helps Library

Dearborn's Henry Ford Centennial Library has installed 25 energy efficient street lights and an electric vehicle charging station under the national Adopt-A-Watt program. Modeled on the AdoptA-Highway program, sponsorships are sold to fund new, energy-efficient equipment, alternative fuel vehicles and other green technologies for financially challenged public agencies. The agencies then realize the cost savings into the future.

Restrictive Wind Zoning Struck Down by Michigan Court

Forest Hill Energy recently won a court order striking down alleged "police power" ordinances passed by townships attempting to regulate the construction and operation of wind turbines. The Clinton County Zoning Ordinance already had extensive wind energy provisions. Nonetheless, three townships passed ordinances that were more restrictive to wind energy development than the county zoning. The additional restrictions related to height, noise, setbacks, and shadow flicker. Forest Hill Energy brought suit seeking a declaration that the townships' "police power" actions were really zoning ordinances in disguise. The Clinton County Circuit Court ruled that since the townships were subject to the county's zoning, the township ordinances were invalid because they were inconsistent with the county's zoning plan---the townships could not get a "second bite at the zoning apple." Forest Hill Energy had already obtained a special use permit for the construction of a 39 turbine project in January of 2012, and now expects to move forward with construction in late 2013.

More Wind Farms to Commence Construction in 2013

NextEra's 150 MW Pheasant Run Wind projects are commencing construction this fall, with the energy to be sold to DTE Electric Company. The two projects will be located in Brookfield, Fairhaven, Grant, Oliver, Sebawaing and Winsor townships, all in Huron County. The Michigan Public

Service Commission approved a 20 MW power purchase agreement (PPA) for DTE Electric Company with Big Turtle Wind Farm, LLC. The twenty year PPA has estimated pricing of up to 5.3 cents per kilowatt-hour. The project will have more than 50 percent Michigan-sourced content, and brings the DTE renewable energy portfolio to 9.8 percent. Consumers Energy will begin construction on its 105 MW Cross Winds Energy Park in Akron and Columbia townships in Tuscola County before the end of the year.

Michigan Shorts

Bay City Electric, Light & Power has signed a 20-year contract to purchase 4.8 MW of energy from the Beebe Community Wind Farm at a price starting at 4.5¢/kWh and increasing to 7.2¢/kWh ? Revolution Lighting Technologies has acquired Relume Technologies, a Michigan manufacturer of LED lighting products and control systems ? The City of Ypsilanti has set a goal to have 1000 solar roofs within the city limits by 2020 ? DTE Energy is offering its customers the opportunity to buy BioGreenGas derived from the Sauk Trail Hills Landfill in Canton ? Lansing Board of Water & Light has announced it will purchase energy from eight wind turbines in Gratiot County under a power purchase agreement with Exelon Wind ??

Virtual Solar Engineering Center Meeting with Success

GreenLancer.com, a Detroit-based solar energy technology company, has announced its initial \$500,000 in funding. The company, launched in 2011, combines state-of-the-art cloud computing with a national network of green energy engineering freelancers ("greenlancers"). Their goal is to reduce the soft costs associated with solar energy projects. Initial investors include Bizdom (Detroit), Start Garden (Grand Rapids), Blue Water Angels (Midland), Northern Michigan Angels (Traverse City), and a private investor. The company has projects in 33 states and six foreign countries.

Converting Corn Stalks into Biofuel

Using a fungus and E. coli bacteria, University of Michigan researchers have turned inedible waste plant material into isobutanol. The waste used in the initial work was corn stalks and leaves. Isobutanol has 82 percent of the energy in gasoline, whereas ethanol has only 67 percent. It also has the added advantage over ethanol of not mixing easily (or absorbing) water. So it is a viable candidate to replace ethanol as a gasoline additive. The fungi turns the plant roughage into sugars that are then converted by escherichia coli to isobutanol. Through bioengineering the researchers believe they can produce a variety of petroleum-based chemicals through this same process.

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