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“Clearly we need more incentives to quickly increase the use of wind and solar power; they will cut costs, increase our energy independence and our national security and reduce the consequences of global warming.”
— Hillary Clinton

Feds Announce \$52 Million in Weatherization Funding and Energy Efficiency Grants for Montana

Vice President Joe Biden and Energy Secretary Chu recently announced that Montana will receive \$52,398,777 in weatherization and energy efficiency funding – including \$26,543,777 for the Weatherization Assistance Program and \$25,855,000 for the State Energy Program.

This is part of a nationwide investment

announced today of nearly \$8 billion under the President's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act – an investment that will put approximately 87,000 Americans to work.

“This energy efficiency funding for states is an important investment in making America more energy independent, creating a cleaner economy

and creating more jobs for the 21st century that can't be outsourced,” said Vice President Biden.

The funding will support weatherization of homes, including adding more insulation, sealing leaks and modernizing heating and air conditioning equipment, which will pay for itself many times over.

Read the full [press release](#).

Carbon Sequestration Bill Blocked by House

Democrats on the House Federal Relations, Energy and Telecommunications Committee have voted against [Senate Bill 498](#), a bill that would regulate carbon sequestration from coal-fired plants, the largest emitters of carbon dioxide, which contributes to global warming. Specifically, the bill aimed to build a regulatory framework for storing carbon dioxide underground.

According to this report in the [Great Falls Tribune](#), the deadlock came about after Republicans refused three

key amendments. The bill is sponsored by Sen. Keith Bales, R-Otter.

Committee chairman Art Noonan, D-Butte, says Bales's bill favored the interests of the industry over the interests of the state.

“To me, this represented the same thing as deregulation: The industry deciding that they wanted to get in front of national trend, decided to support legislation in which the authors of the bill drafted (it) exactly the way the industry wanted to see it,” he said. “I'm in sup-

port of coal, but I am not in support of pushing through a piece of legislation hastily that will have huge consequences both for the state of Montana, for local citizens and for our economy.”



Art Noonan, Energy and Telecommunications Committee Chair. Photo credit: Montana Legislature.

Winners of the First Annual Montana BetterBricks Awards Announced



Montana BetterBricks winners.
Photo credit: BetterBricks

“To maintain our industry’s growth, create jobs and meet President Obama’s goal of doubling renewable energy production in the next three years, we need smart federal policies, such as a renewable portfolio standard with a specific solar provision that help to develop and deploy vast solar resources around the country,” — Rhone Resch, president and CEO of SEIA

At the first annual Montana BetterBricks Awards, three outstanding leaders in the green building industry were honored for their efforts by BetterBricks, the commercial initiative of the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, along with NorthWestern Energy and the Montana Electric Cooperative Association (MECA). The winners were announced at the Montana Ambassadors Annual Conference, which was held in February at the Great Northern Hotel in Helena.

The winners are:
Owner/Decision Maker: Gary Griffith, Facilities Director (retired) Bozeman School District. Gary focused on energy conservation for the

District, and through a combination of retrofits, repairs and operational practices, he dramatically decreased the District’s natural gas consumption by 50 percent. Two of the District’s elementary schools are believed to be the only ENERGY STAR® certified schools in Montana, achieved under his direction.

Finalist: Tom Schussler, Director of Facilities, Providence St. Patrick Hospital and Health Sciences Center and Tim Chopp, Manager of Facilities Engineering, Providence St. Patrick Hospital and Health Sciences Center in Missoula. Because of Tom and Tim’s efforts, St. Patrick is the only hospital to certify (twice) under the ENERGY STAR program in the state of Montana.

Architecture: Randy Hafer,

President and co-owner of High Plains Architects in Billings. Randy led his team to reinvent a professional office building called, “Home on the Range.” This project received LEED® Platinum certification from the U.S. Green Building Council, currently Montana’s only Platinum project.

Engineering: Mark Hines, Mechanical Engineer, Montana state Architecture and Engineering Division, Dept. of Administration. The State Buildings Energy Conservation Program relies on Mark’s expertise to design the state’s energy efficiency projects. The program regularly saves 15-30 percent of a building’s energy costs and is reporting over one million dollars in savings a year.

Read the full [press release](#).

SEIA: U.S. Solar Market Hit Record Growth In 2008, Despite Economic Crisis

The Solar Energy Industries Association released its *2008 U.S. Solar Industry Year in Review*, highlighting a third year of record growth.

The report notes that 1,265 megawatts (MW) of solar power of all types were installed in 2008, bringing total U.S. solar power capacity up 17 percent to 8,775 MW. The 2008 figure included 342 MW of solar photovoltaic (PV), 139 MWTh (thermal equivalent) of solar water heating, 762 MWTh of pool heating

and an estimated 21 MW of solar space heating and cooling.

Rates of growth beat last year’s as well, with the grid-tied PV segment leading with a growth rate of 81 percent for the amount of installed power in 2008 (292 MW) over the amount installed in 2007 (161 MW). Solar water heating installation grew at a 50 percent rate in 2008 (139 MWTh) over 2007 (93 MWTh) and pool heating growth slowed by 3 percent

in 2008 (762 MWTh) from 2007 (785 MWTh).

No new concentrating solar power plants came online in the United States this past year, but projects now in the pipeline add up to more than 6 gigawatts (6,000 MW). Among these are projects planned for California’s Mojave Desert, Arizona and Florida. Four gigawatts of solar energy can power up to a million households.

Read the full [press release](#).

Interior Dept. Says U.S. Offshore Wind Resources Could Lead America's Clean-Energy Revolution

U.S. offshore areas hold enormous potential for wind energy development near the nation's highest areas of electricity demand – coastal metropolitan centers, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar said recently.

"More than three-fourths of the nation's electricity demand comes from coastal states and the wind potential off the coasts of the lower 48 states actually exceeds our entire U.S. electricity demand," Salazar told a summit meeting of 25X'25 America's Energy Future, a group working to lower America's carbon emissions.

Citing major findings of a report he commissioned from Interior scientists, Salazar also said the Outer Continental Shelf energy resources report found huge information gaps

about the location and extent of offshore oil and gas resources.

Salazar said information from the U.S. Geological Survey-Minerals Management Service Report will be a starting point for public comment meetings around the country in the next few weeks, starting in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and New Orleans, Louisiana, next week. The Executive Summary is online at www.doi.gov/ocs.

Interior, which managers of one-fifth of the nation's land mass and 1.7 billion acres of ocean off the U.S. coasts, will have a major role in creating the nation's clean-energy future, Salazar said. The Department's Bureau of Land Management has identified about 20.6 million acres of public land with wind energy potential in the 11 western states and 29.5 million acres with solar energy potential in the six southwestern

states. There are also over 140 million acres of public land in the western states and Alaska with geothermal resource potential.

There is also significant wind and wave potential in U.S. offshore waters. The National Renewable Energy Lab has identified more than 1,000 gigawatts of wind potential off the Atlantic coast, and more than 900 gigawatts of wind potential off the Pacific Coast. The Lab estimates that the class 5 wind potential off the coasts of the lower 48 states exceeds the entire U.S. electricity demand. Currently, there are more than 2,000 megawatts of offshore wind projects proposed in the United States.

"We are opening our doors not just to oil and gas and coal, but also to the wise development of solar, wind and wave, biofuels, geothermal, and small hydro on America's lands," Salazar said.

This newsletter is a monthly feature of the **Montana Green Power website**. The website is funded with Universal System Benefits charges paid by all NorthWestern Energy customers.



Visit the website at www.MontanaGreenPower.com for more information on solar, wind, bioenergy, energy efficiency, and other topics.

Have a renewable energy tip or some news you want to share? Send it info@montanagreenpower.com.

Funding Opportunities: Rural Energy for America Program

The U.S. Dept. of Agriculture has announced that it is accepting funding applications from eligible entities for grants to conduct energy audits under the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP).

"For the first time ever, USDA will make grant funding available this year through the Rural Energy for America Program to

help agricultural producers and rural small businesses obtain audits to identify ways to improve energy efficiency," Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said. "The assistance provided by this program is in keeping with President Obama's energy conservation goals for our nation." The program is authorized in Section 9007 of the 2008 Farm Bill.

The audits are intended to help rural small businesses and agricultural producers determine where to make changes in their operations to enable them to reduce energy consumption. Audits are required for energy efficiency projects funded through REAP that exceed \$50,000. States, tribal and local governments, land grant colleges or universities, other institutions of

higher learning, and electric cooperatives and public power entities are eligible to receive funds to conduct the audits. Parties seeking audits from the grantees must pay 25 percent of audit costs.

Applications for grants must be completed and submitted on paper or electronically no later than June 9.

See the [Federal Register announcement](#).



The Farm Energy Search Tool, developed by the National Center for Appropriate Technology with funding from USDA's Risk Management Agency, makes it easy to find energy-related equipment, funding, and technical assistance in Montana and other states. In addition to its search capabilities, the tool also includes a self-listing feature that allows energy-related businesses, agencies, and non-profit organizations serving agriculture to submit or update listings.

Update

Mark Your Calendars

Here's a sample of the many upcoming events focusing on energy issues. For a more complete list, see our [Events Calendar](#).

Grid-tied PV Workshop

April 20-24, 2008
Califon, NJ

In the United States, the grid-tied market is the fastest growing sector of the PV industry. By eliminating the battery-based sections from the PV D&I curriculum, students walk away with a more focused concentration on the most popular PV system on the market. Five-day sessions of this course include one day of lab simulation and tours. Combine this course with PV Lab Week for more hands-on experience.

WINDPOWER 2009 Conference and Exhibition

May 4-9, 2009
Chicago, IL

WINDPOWER 2009 Conference and Exhibition is the largest annual wind conference and exhibition in the world featuring over 13,000 attendees and over 776 exhibitors. Each year, wind energy professionals gather at this event to learn about the latest industry developments and technologies, review new products and services in the expansive exhibit hall, and network with leading industry decision-makers.

Question of the Month

Can I design and install a photovoltaic (PV) system myself?

Answer: Maybe. However, unless you are very handy or experienced in home wiring, we suggest using experienced professionals to design and install anything more than the simplest application, for the following reasons:

- You might void the manufacturer's warranties
 - You might not have a functional system after spending your hard-earned money on the system
 - Electricity can be dangerous--you might get hurt
 - You might damage your home or appliances during installation
- The goal of a stand-alone

system designer is to assure customer satisfaction by providing a well-designed, durable system with a 20-year life expectancy (or more). This depends on sound design, specification and procurement of quality components, good engineering and installation practices, and a consistent preventive maintenance program.

System sizing is perhaps the easiest part of achieving a durable PV power system. To determine the correct system size, you must first analyze your electricity loads. For more information, visit www.eere.energy.gov/consumer/.

In addition to sizing the system correctly, a thorough

knowledge of the availability, performance, and cost of components is the key to good system design. Price/performance trade-offs should be made and reevaluated throughout the design process. When you start your design, obtain as much information as you can about the components you might use.

After studying all the issues, you can do an initial sizing of the PV system and get some ideas about specifying system components.

See the Montana renewable energy dealer list at www.montanagreenpower.com/dealers.php to find dealers in your area.