

Study says wind power could save money

By Craig Wolf

Poughkeepsie Journal

Thursday, February 10, 2005

Wind power could greatly expand in New York state without disrupting the overall grid and would likely "significantly reduce the cost of system operation" while cutting pollution, a draft study report says.

The study was commissioned by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority and the New York Independent System Operator. General Electric Energy Consulting did the research.

Consultants found that 10 percent of the state's peak load in a 2008 scenario, amounting to 3,300 megawatts of wind power, could be handled by the grid with only minor adjustments to existing practices and plans.

And in something of a surprise, they found overall costs to consumers would fall slightly. Municipalities pay premium rates to get wind power through New York's deregulated system of supply from Community Energy Inc., which has 48 megawatts on wind farms upstate. That is nearly all the existing wind capacity in the state, New York Independent System Operator spokesman Ken Klapp said.

Expansion needed

But if wind power were expanded to the 3,300-megawatt level examined in the study, savings would result, the consultants said.

"Wind generation has the potential to significantly reduce the cost of system operation in New York while also reducing emissions and dependence on fossil fuels," the report said. "The zonal spot prices would decrease by a few percent to as much as 10 percent."

A zonal spot price is a system operator's charge to utility companies for a particular hour in a particular region. That does not mean consumer prices would fall at the same rate, however.

Sulfur oxides emissions would drop by 5 percent and nitrogen oxides by 10 percent, the consultants said.

"That makes me feel really good that we made the right decision," said Town of Fishkill Supervisor Joan Pagonis, who will propose next week to raise to 100 percent the town's purchase of wind energy, up from 60 percent.

Steve Sullivan, a spokesman for trade group WindPower New York, said the study would help quiet objections to wind power, which he attributed mainly to "not in my back yard" sentiments.

Craig Wolf can be reached at cwolf@poughkeepsiejournal.com