

Wind-power set to continue rapid growth, group says

April 9 2010, By Dana Hull

The nation's wind-power industry showed record growth in 2009 and could see dramatic expansion if there was a national "renewable electricity standard," the American Wind Energy Association said in a report released Thursday.

The industry association says more than 10,000 megawatts of new wind [power](#) were installed throughout the United States in 2009, generating as much electricity as three large nuclear power plants. And 14 states are now included in what the industry calls the "gigawatt club," which means they have more than 1,000 megawatts of wind power installed. One [megawatt](#) is enough to power between 750 and 1,000 homes.

Texas, Iowa and California lead all states in megawatts installed.

The American Wind Energy Association advocates for a nationwide [renewable electricity](#) standard, a policy that would require utilities to procure a set amount of power from [renewable sources](#) like wind and solar by a certain date. AWEA would like to see a national target of 25 percent by 2025.

California and 29 other states have their own renewable standards, but wind advocates say the lack of a federal policy is hurting the industry.

"A national (standard) will provide the long-term certainty that businesses need to invest tens of billions of dollars in new installations and manufacturing facilities, which would create hundreds of thousands

of American jobs," said AWEA CEO Denise Bode.

In California, the vast majority of wind turbines are clustered in three regions: Altamont Pass between Livermore and Tracy, Tehachapi near Bakersfield and San Geronio near Palm Springs.

California's Renewable Portfolio Standard, established in 2002, calls on utilities to procure 20 percent of their power from renewable resources by 2010.

"When the RPS law was passed, that really spurred developer interest in the state," said Nancy Rader, executive director of the California Wind Energy Association. "There are a lot of projects in the works, and we expect about 800 megawatts to be installed in 2010."

Unlike the solar industry, which has put panels on the roofs of American homes, the wind industry remains largely out of reach for most consumers.

"There are small wind turbines, but you can't site them in urban and suburban areas," said Rader. "You have to have land or a ranch to put up a small wind turbine."

Later this month, federal officials are expected to rule on Cape Wind, a controversial project off the coast of Cape Cod that, if approved, would be the nation's largest offshore wind farm. The project is backed by Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick and renewable energy advocates but has been strenuously opposed by Native American tribes who say the proposed [wind turbines](#) would disturb ancestral underwater burial grounds and spiritual ceremonies. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar is expected to make a final ruling on the project by the end of this month.

WIND-POWER LEADERS:

Wind now generates more than 35,000 megawatts of power in the United States, with each megawatt capable of powering between 750 and 1,000 homes. The three top wind-power states:

- Texas: 9,405 megawatts installed
- Iowa: 3,670 megawatts installed
- California: 2,723 megawatts installed

(SOURCE: American [Wind Energy](#) Association)

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