

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

NEWS

MEDIA RELATIONS – NEWS SERVICE

Campus Box 3250
Normal, IL 61790-3250
MediaRelations.IllinoisState.edu

Telephone: (309) 438-5631
Facsimile: (309) 438-5748

Wind energy to add billions to Illinois economy

Contact: David Loomis, Center for Renewable Energy, (309) 438-7979

Thursday, July 21, 2016

Illinois' 25 largest wind farms have supported 20,173 jobs during construction and will add \$6.4 billion to local economies over the 25-year life of the projects.

That is one of the findings of a study on the economic impact of wind energy released by Illinois State University's Center for Renewable Energy. Center Director David Loomis announced the findings at the Illinois Renewable Energy Conference in Normal on July 21.

“Wind energy has played an increasingly important part in the state's energy mix resulting in numerous economic development benefits,” Loomis said. “Decision-makers need to be well-informed about these benefits so that they consider all of the factors when deciding on future wind projects.”

The Center's report adds that the 25 largest wind farms in Illinois support about 869 permanent jobs with 226 direct jobs in rural areas in Illinois. The wind farms generate \$30.4 million in annual property taxes for local communities and \$13.86 million in extra income for landowners who lease their land to developers.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, Illinois could become the second largest wind state in the country behind Texas by 2050. Illinois is currently fifth, ranked behind Texas, Iowa, California and Oklahoma. In order to become the second largest wind state, Illinois would need to add about 10 times its current wind capacity, which could result in approximately 10 times the number of jobs supported.

McLean County leads the state with 546 MW or 15.1 percent of the state's wind capacity. LaSalle and Lee Counties are next with 9.8 and 9.7 percent of the state's capacity, respectively.

Illinois built two new wind farms in 2015 after two years of not building any. Several new wind farms were permitted in 2015 and could start construction in 2016.

“State energy policy will be key to Illinois' wind energy future,” said Loomis. “Current legislative proposals could fix the state's renewable portfolio standard and increase the percentage of our electricity coming from renewable energy.”