

Illinois Could Become Fourth Largest State for Wind in 2011



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Illinois has always been recognized as a leader for renewable energy generation, and has remained fairly consistent in its generation of the product. Much of the acclaim attributable to Illinois' success in such endeavors is a direct result of the efforts from organizations for which the sole objective is to promote sustainable energy development within Illinois. Such organizations include (but are not limited to) The Illinois Renewable Energy Association (IREA), Illinois Wind Working Group, Illinois Center for Renewable Energy, the Illinois Wind Energy Association (IWEA)- amongst others. Each organization uniquely specializes in long-run efficiency with interests in solidifying a permanent imprint in electric generation- fusing generation techniques currently employed with greater renewable standards. Indebted to reasons conveyed above, the state of Illinois has experienced exponential growth within the state of renewable wind generation.

The Illinois Center for Renewable Energy recently contributed a competitive analysis that examined the state of Illinois wind generating capacity. The analysis situated Illinois at the 7th position for the top 10 states who currently generate electricity using wind as resource (It should be noted that the degree of comparison from the reported analysis was limited by the scope of what is publically provided either directly from associated project development companies or third party entities whom are either affiliated with such developers or specifically crafted in obtaining relevant data). The same analysis also offered a forecasted projection of the state of electric generation for the next 2 fiscal quarters- given construction efforts and estimated completion dates- and also yielding a very interesting result for Illinois.

Illinois Wind Forecast Projection: Through Quarter 3, 2011

- a. Total Wind Capacity End Of Quarter 4 Status (2010): 1848 MW**
- b. Total Wind Capacity End of Quarter 1 Projection(2010): 2046**
- c. Total Wind Capacity End of Quarter 2 Projection(2011):2285.4**
- d. Total Wind Capacity End of Quarter 3 Projection (2011): 2435.4**

The forecasted statistics above projects that Illinois will have a total of 2435.4 MW of installed capacity by the end of fiscal Quarter 3 during the year of 2011. Ideally, this would situate Illinois as the 5th largest state in electric generation using renewable wind energy as a resource. While juxtaposed to states also devoted to the direction of aggressive renewable wind expansion such as Washington, Oregon and Colorado (all with total forecast capacity loads of 2356 MW, 2296.3 MW, and 1800 MW respectively), Illinois' progression to 5th is accurately deemed successful.

One state that has seen aggressive expansion and significant opportunity for wind development within the past year is Minnesota. The analysis given by Illinois Center for Renewable Energy noted that Minnesota's went from 1817 MW to a 2494 MW projection (compared to Illinois' 2435.4 MW estimate) in just 3 quarters (approximately a 677 MW gain), marking the state as

the 4th largest electric generator for renewable wind energy. While this statistic is notably appealing- it should also be noted that exponential increases in shorter periods of time are subject to the same forces that deters project completion in states with smaller capacity load projections: moratoriums and exogenous impacts to production and thus overstating projected values. Moratoriums and exogenous shocks to production are very popular examples of such forces.

A moratorium- or delay or suspension of planned activity- would retard Minnesota's progressive efforts and inevitably stimulate the competitive wheels of states with similar visions for progressive expansion- particularly Illinois. The difference between and Illinois projected MW production and Minnesota's is only 58.6 MW. In other words, if one or more of Minnesota's projects projected is retarded due to a moratorium or some exogenous shock to production (such as detrimental weather conditions, worker strikes, etc.), then the loss of capacity would place Illinois as the 4th largest electric generator via renewable wind resources. Of course one might speculate that Illinois could potentially host the same problems with construction efforts currently implemented. However, Illinois currently has 3 projects currently under construction (Big Sky Wind Farm, Top Crop Wind Farm Phase II, and White Oak Energy Farm), compared to multiple projects in which Minnesota's position as 4th in the market for renewable wind currently relies. Therefore, it is sensible and logical to derive that Minnesota carries greater risk for halting progression of wind farm construction as a result of factors previously mentioned- and squeezing Illinois into a more competitive position with the potential of becoming 4th.

What does it all mean?

As Illinois is historically recognized as a leader for renewable energy generation within the United States, it is statistically safe to assume that the consistent trend in its renewable - developmental habits will continue. Furthermore, new expansive efforts by organizations dedicated to renewable wind aspirations within the state of Minnesota hold greater risk of moratorium and exogenous impacts to generation- due to the sheer population of newly approved projects within the region. An analysis offered by The Illinois Center for Renewable Energy conveys the strength in assumptions and assertions of Illinois' projected MW generation capacity's made within this report. Basically- the likelihood of Illinois falling prey to the same forces subject to retard progressive efforts within Minnesota is much lower, and suggests that the 58.6 MW difference which currently separates the two states may soon become an arbitrary figure. As much of what is given within this analysis might be coined- and rightfully so- as theoretical speculation amongst pretenses of past behaviors that are subject to future errors, it should be noted that assertions – like any simulated projection- made within this analysis are tentative on future events. As only time can most accurately depict the true state of Illinois' true competitive nature, we can safely note that the projection of Illinois 4th place position in the market for renewable wind energy appears promising.