

ENERGY IN MONTANA

OLD VS. NEW

Colstrip photo by Ian Macdaus



Northern Plains Resource Council's campaign to move Montana forward to cleaner, safer, cheaper sources of energy



Wind, energy efficiency leave dirty coal in the dust

The truth is that dirty, outdated fossil fuel energy sources such as coal are replete with costs that are shoved onto American families and American businesses. More than 23,000 deaths each year can be attributed to air pollution from coal-fired plants.¹ Many more Americans suffer a litany of expensive and debilitating health problems, leading to countless lost work days. This is just from burning coal. Add to this the health effects of mining and transporting coal.

A single incident, the 2008 coal ash spill in Tennessee, cost taxpayers over \$800 million. Infrastructure, such as the condemning of land for the proposed Tongue River Railroad, will lay a heavy cost on farms and ranches that will become more expensive to operate and will lose value permanently.

Several studies have found that coal-fired power plants spew more carbon and mercury into the air than any other source.




Fossil fuels heavily subsidized

From 2002-08, the federal government provided substantially larger subsidies to fossil fuels (\$72 billion) than renewable energy (\$29 billion).

Most of the subsidies for fossil fuels are written into the U.S. tax code as permanent provisions, while many of the subsidies for renewables are time-limited initiatives implemented through energy bills, with expiration dates that limit their long-term usefulness to the energy industry.⁵

Locally, the 2009 and 2011 Montana legislatures authorized \$90 million in tax subsidies to the out-of-state-owned Signal Peak coal mine near Roundup (that's more money than the state made from the Otter Creek coal lease).

Continued on back

| | Colstrip 1-4 | Wind-Judith Gap | Efficiency |
|---------------------------|---|---|--|
| |  |  |  |
| Price we pay (MWh) | \$48.75-56.05² | \$42.25² | \$15.24³ |
| CO₂ | 2,366.7 lb/MWh₄ | Wind and efficiency produce no harmful emissions | |
| NO_x | 4.5 lb/MWh₄ | | |
| SO_x | 1.9 lb/MWh₄ | | |

¹ Bruce Barrett, MD, PhD, Department of Family Medicine, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health <http://www.fammed.wisc.edu/our-department/news/coal-health-risks>

² NorthWestern Energy Rate Case Testimony, William Thomas, July 8, 2010, pg 7. <http://www.psc.state.mt.us/eDocs/eDocuments/pdfFiles/D2009-9-129IN10070840086TE.pdf>

³ NorthWestern Energy "Motion for leave to supplement additional issues testimony and NorthWestern's response to MCC-433(b)," pdf pg 5. <http://psc.mt.gov/eDocs/eDocuments/pdfFiles/D2009-9-129IN10111649522M.pdf>

⁴ United States Environmental Protection Agency "Gridweb Power Plant Level Data" PDF pg 5. http://cfpub.epa.gov/egridweb/view_plnt.cfm

⁵ Environmental Law Institute. 2009. Estimating U.S. Government Subsidies to Energy Sources: 2002-08. http://www.eli.org/Program_Areas/innovation_governance_energy.cfm

WIND: AN ENERGY SOURCE THAT NEVER RUNS OUT

Renewables, efficiency create jobs

In 2009, 1,133 people were employed by the coal industry in Montana. U.S. coal sales have been on the decline in recent years, and plans to export coal to Asia will prop up this industry a while longer. By contrast, Montana had 2,155 “green” jobs in 2007 – nearly twice as many as in the coal industry. Montana ranks fifth in the nation for wind-energy potential.⁶ This means our potential growth in high-paying, clean energy jobs is significant. The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that students with sustainable energy technician certification will make \$37,500 annually on average, with expected growth of 15% through 2018.⁷

If the U.S. adopts a long-term energy strategy that relies on energy efficiency and renewable energy, rather than coal-fired electricity, Montanans would likely see lower electricity costs by 2020, according to a new report from Synapse Energy Economics.

Prepared for the Civil Society Institute, the report *Toward a Sustainable Future for the U.S. Power Sector: Beyond Business as Usual 2011*,⁸ concludes that transitioning to clean energy would save \$83 billion over the next 40 years nationwide. In addition, say its authors, the plan would create 3.1 million “job-years” through the construction and operation of clean power generation – the equivalent of 310,000 people employed for an entire decade.

⁶ Mark Muro, Jonathan Rothwell, and Devashree Saha, *Sizing the Clean Economy: A National and Regional Green Jobs Assessment*. Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings (2011): n. pag. Web. July 26, 2011. http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Programs/Metro/clean_economy/0713_clean_economy.pdf.

⁷ Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, <http://www.bea.gov/regional/reis/drill.cfm>

⁸ The full report can be accessed at <http://www.northernplains.org/new-report-outlines-realistic-path-for-cleaner-and-less-expensive-energy-future-in-montana-nov-16-2011>

Community wind benefits

Community wind projects are locally owned, commercial wind projects that provide direct benefits to local communities. “Locally owned” means one or more members of the community have a financial stake in the wind project rather than just the few who gain from land lease payments, tax revenue or other payment in lieu of taxes. The term “community wind” refers to the existence of local investment rather than the size of a project.

Community wind projects:

- Provide clean electricity, without damaging our groundwater or the quality of the air our families breathe every day;
- Strengthen our energy independence;
- Provide supplemental revenue streams for farms and ranches;
- Broaden the tax base in rural communities;
- Stabilize energy prices, as wind farms don’t require any fuel once they are built;
- Provide good-paying jobs in the community;
- Reduce power lost from long-distance transmission lines;
- Connect people to their energy source, encouraging them to become more energy efficient.

Keep informed! Take action! Join

Northern Plains Resource Council is a conservation and family agriculture group that organizes Montana citizens to protect our water quality, family farms and ranches, and unique quality of life.

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Visit our website:
www.northernplains.org



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