

American Corn Growers Foundation

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Congress Should Act Quickly To Extend the Wind Energy Production Tax Incentive

An Editorial Comment on Wind Energy Policy
By Dan McGuire, Chief Executive, American Corn Growers Foundation
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Congress needs to prioritize extending renewable energy incentives. In so doing they will be in step with the vast majority of the American public in acknowledging and endorsing wind energy's many benefits.

Wind Energy is Green Power: According to the U.S. Department of Energy and National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) **Wind Energy Benefits** fact sheet www.nrel.gov/docs/fy05osti/37602.pdf, "Wind energy is clean energy that produces no emissions, which means it doesn't contribute to acid rain and snow, global climate change, smog, regional haze, mercury contamination, water withdrawal, and particulate-related health effects." Water use is also a critical issue for this country, especially in the Great Plains and the western U.S. NREL estimates that 4,000 Megawatts of wind energy results in 10.51 billion gallons of savings in water withdrawn and 6.31 billion gallons of savings in water consumed. A 1/23/08 AP article reports that one nuclear plant in America's Southeast draws 33 million gallons of water a day, with 17 million gallons lost to evaporation in the cooling towers. And fossil/thermal plants don't operate 100 percent of the time either.

Savings on CO₂: The American Wind Energy Association estimated that 31 billion kWh of wind in 2007 would offset 19 million tons of CO₂ emitted vs. that power being generated from the average U.S. electricity fuel mix according to the U.S. Energy Information Agency. A single 1 MW wind turbine displaces 1,800 tons of CO₂ annually.

Wind Energy vs. Other U.S Energy Subsidies: Every energy technology is supported by the federal government. Wind energy is no exception, nor should it be. Federal energy subsidies in 2003 ranged from \$37 billion to \$64 billion, according to the National Commission on Energy Policy. Wind energy accounted for less than 1% of the total. Wind energy enhances national energy independence and promotes sustainable, rural economic development for America. Wind takes the pressure off natural gas prices, the largest cost in nitrogen fertilizer. So, no apologies needed for wind energy's minor subsidies.

Wildlife Habitat, Birds and Bats: Wind projects need not be sited on migratory bird flyways or in fact on large ranches intended for hunting or tourism. The wind industry is paying attention to those issues and implementing strategies to mitigate them. According to a National Wind Coordinating Committee resource document, **Avian Collisions with Wind Turbines: A Summary of Existing Studies and Comparisons to Other Sources of Avian Collision Mortality in the United States**, "It is estimated that from 100 million to over 1 billion birds are killed annually in the United States due to collisions with human-made structures, including vehicles, buildings and windows, power lines, communication towers, and wind turbines." Wind turbines accounted for only 10 to 40 thousand. The issue of wind turbines killing birds or bats, while taken seriously by the industry, is very minor and largely diversionary.

Wind energy works for rural economic development while saving precious water resources. Wind energy makes the U.S. more energy independent. On the CO₂ issue, a Feb. 4 Dow Jones article, **Wall Street Shows Skepticism Over Coal**, reports, "Three of Wall Street's biggest investment banks are set to announce today that they are imposing new environmental standards that will make it harder for companies to get financing to build coal-fired power plants in the U.S...The banks say they will encourage energy-efficiency and renewable-energy pushes before backing new coal plants." Rural America should also embrace the 20-percent Vision that the President mentioned in his State of The Union address a couple of years ago. The U.S. Dept. of Energy and National Renewable Energy Laboratory report, "20 percent energy from wind will require on the order of 2,750,000 full time employee job years over a 20 year project life." So, while fossil fuel interests may attack wind energy, as they have ethanol and biofuels, the American people are demanding Congress support wind energy with production incentives.