

U.S. Department of Energy - Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

Wind and Water Power Program - Wind Powering America

Wind Powering America Hosts 12th Annual All-States Summit: A Wind Powering America Success Story

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In 2012, the wind energy industry saw great expansion in capacity as well as uncertainty about future growth due to the looming expiration and last-minute extension of the Production Tax Credit. On May 9 at the Illinois Institute of Technology's Hermann Hall in Chicago, Wind Powering America (WPA) hosted the 12th Annual All-States Summit with an agenda focused on helping attendees plan for the future and "ride the rollercoaster."

The Summit, which follows the American Wind Energy Association's (AWEA's) annual WINDPOWER Conference and Exhibition, provided state Wind Working Groups, energy officials, the U.S. Energy Department and national laboratory representatives, as well as professional and institutional partners an opportunity to review successes, opportunities, and challenges for wind energy and to plan future collaboration.

"The WPA Summit is an opportunity to reflect on the influence of WPA participants on the mitigation of barriers to wind deployment. Without those efforts, there would be less wind generation in the United States today," said Jonathan Bartlett, Wind Powering America national director at the U.S. Department of Energy.

Agenda topics included an update on the U.S. Department of Energy's Strategic Education and Outreach plans, a panel discussion about ways to handle uncertainty in the wind market, a preview of Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory's 2012 Wind Technologies Market Report, and more.

According to Ian Baring-Gould, national technical director of the Wind Powering America initiative at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, the topics and speakers for the Summit were selected to demonstrate diverse industry perspectives and to help stakeholders continue a dialog about where the industry is heading in the future.

"When we prepare the agenda for the Summit, we look at what impacts the market today and what types of information are needed by state organizations and the WPA family," Baring-Gould said. "Take the morning session. It was about what organizations can learn from the different market sectors, from successful states, small developers, big developers, and original equipment manufacturers, about policies, procedures, and activities that can help smooth the uncertainty in the larger marketplace around wind development."

"Another session consisted of successful models, both within our industry as well as other industries. That was followed by a discussion about whether those models could be, and how they could be, replicated in other parts of the country," Baring-Gould said. "Sharing these stories gets to the heart of what WPA is supposed to do. We share stories and successes, what has worked and hasn't worked in other states or parts of the country. And we make sure that information is widely available."

One of the announcements during this year's Summit was the possible transition of the Wind for Schools project from the U.S. Department of Energy to the National Science Foundation.

Chris Rose, executive director of the Renewable Energy Alaska Project, said that the uncertainty surrounding the move comes at a critical time for Alaska and other Wind for Schools states.

"It's somewhat ironic that we've created an uncertainty around that program," Rose said. "It's a very important program to many states, including Alaska, and we're sorry that it's kind of been put into limbo for now because we're excited about the program. We're excited to engage with students and communities, and at this point we're just playing a waiting game."

Although further uncertainty surrounds the wind energy industry as a whole, Simon Mahan, winner of the Novus Ventus (New Wind Award) and renewable energy manager for the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, believes that the future is still bright for wind energy.

"We have one wind farm in the Southeast region and have historically been written off the map as an undevelopable area, but because of new low-wind technologies and advanced techniques, the cost of wind energy has substantially decreased and made our region viable," Mahan said. "The concern about the Production Tax Credit is real, but the wind isn't going away."

One of the highlights of the annual WPA All-States Summit is an awards presentation recognizing the accomplishments of peers. For the second year, network stakeholders participated in an online survey to nominate individuals for awards. Team members at NREL and the Energy Department reviewed the nominations and presented the following awards during this year's summit:

Outstanding Wind Working Group Award: South Dakota Wind Working Group for steadfastness and excellence in conducting wind outreach to South Dakota stakeholders

Outstanding Wind Leadership in Education Award: Ken Starcher and Vaughn Nelson, Alternative Energy Institute at West Texas A&M University for ongoing extraordinary efforts to advance wind energy education

Outstanding Wind Powering America Partner Award: James Madison University for continuing efforts to support Wind Powering America, including the Wind for Schools Project and the offshore JEDI analysis

Larry Flowers Outstanding Leadership Award: Andy Kruse for extraordinary bold leadership in the distributed wind industry

Novus Ventus (New Wind) Award: Simon Mahan for dedication to wind energy outreach efforts in the Southeast region to advance deployment

Small Wind Leadership Award: Brent Summerville for visionary leadership and ongoing valuable contributions to the small wind industry

Western Regional Leadership Award: Western Resource Advocates for bold leadership in supporting wind energy development in the

Western states

Midwestern Regional Leadership Award: Wind on the Wires for ongoing efforts to overcome barriers to wind energy deployment in the Midwest

Eastern Regional Leadership Award: Clean Energy States Alliance for extraordinary efforts to facilitate and support wind energy deployment in the Eastern states

Carpe Ventum Award for Fire Island Wind Farm: Chugach Electric Association, Alaska Wind Working Group in recognition of efforts to develop the first utility-scale wind farm in Alaska.

Rose felt it was important that the Fire Island project received recognition for the many "firsts" it brought to the state of Alaska.

"Fire Island was important for many reasons. First, it was the first wind project located near Anchorage, and it was important because it was an Independent Power Producer that put that power onto the grid. It's located on an uninhabited island just a few miles off the coast of Anchorage, so it has the benefit of the offshore-type wind without having to worry about the NIMBY factors, and the biggest city in the state gets to see wind energy," Rose said. "It's also right on the flight path of all the planes that land at Anchorage International Airport, so everyone who flies in and out of there is flying over the wind farm now. The educational value is tremendous."

Steve Wegman, executive director of the South Dakota Wind Energy Association, appreciated the Outstanding Wind Working Group award in recognition of the team's hard work and dedication.

"Even though we're one of the few states that does not have a net-metering law, we have the highest participation of school districts in the Wind for Schools program," Wegman said. "Many contractors, landowners, landowner associations, and state officials belong to our organization. It's about doing the right thing."

Attended by 77 people at Hermann Hall and an additional 71 via webinar, the event contributed to WPA's goal of disseminating valuable wind energy information to the many parties involved with the program.

"I think it's really important for states to continue to interact and build relationships with advocates and educators from other states, to learn from other people's experiences, and to keep those relationships so that when you have a question, you have a network of people to call. I think one of the more important aspects of the Wind Powering America program is getting us together at least once a year to network and to talk about what's been going on in all of our states," Rose said.

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