



The Wait for Wind Power

Jul 14, 2005

Leigh Mills, NBC 15 evening news

How much extra would you pay for utilities if it helped out the environment?

As Madison's economy grows and natural resources are depleted, more residents are looking for electricity options.

Picture this: every year, the MG&E Wind Program displaces enough coal to fill a train more than a mile long.

Their wind towers power the homes of more than 4,000 MG&E customers, including Sonja Newenhouse.

She has subscribed to the wind program since its inception, eager to pay a little more for a cleaner, renewable energy source.

"It's a much cheaper investment for me in the long run if I spend 10 dollars now than 20 or 30 on my utility bill in the future," she says, "Because our energy prices will no doubt just continue to rise."

Others share Newenhouse's sentiments. In fact, about 100 customers are on the wind program waiting list.

"That demand has stayed there from the very beginning and has continued to grow as wind energy becomes more and more popular," says Madison Gas and Electric spokesman, Steve Kraus.

That's why electric companies, including MG&E, plan to purchase more power from a proposed wind farm in Dodge and Fond du Lac counties.

"We might be able to price it much more attractively," says Kraus, "Or maybe we'll be able to roll it into our rates overall and have all of our customers benefit from wind." Until then, Newenhouse says even one person can make a difference.

"Collectively it all adds up. That's our motto at work, that's my motto at home," she says confidently, "All the little things you do make a significant difference."

Right now, the wait time to get into the wind program is about a year.

Currently MG&E uses wind to power 4400 homes.

If the proposed wind farm is built, the utility would be able to power another 14,000 homes.