



Idaho Council on Industry and the Environment

Week of March 10, 2008

This is a weekly roundup of some of ICIE's activities in and around the Idaho Legislature. Staffing limits mean we can't cover every meeting. If there's an item of interest to you at an upcoming meeting of one of the environment or agriculture committees, let us know and we'll try to cover it. Agendas are available at www.state.id.us. Click on "Legislative" and click on "Calendars and agendas." (For copies of previous Saturday Summary reports, go to www.icie.org)

House Environment, Energy and Technology Committee, March 10, 2008

On Monday, March 10th, Rich Rayhill, vice president in charge permitting, environmental studies, site acquisition and legal analysis at Ridgeline Energy, a private company, presented a report on renewable energy opportunities in Idaho using wind energy to the House Environment, Energy and Technology Committee. He compared the potential for wind energy in rural Idaho economies to the California Gold Rush.

As an example, Texas, second in wind power potential in the United States, has built wind energy facilities representing about 12.5 megawatts. At this point, 25% of the wind energy comes from West Texas, and they are still building. Oregon, representing the 24th state in the nation in wind energy potential is next in building wind power facilities. Idaho is 13th in the nation.

The potential for jobs, both temporary and permanent, is tremendous. Depending on which study one uses, every 100 watts of energy is directly responsible for between 42 and 93 new jobs. In fact, Rayhill said, wind power produces twice as many new jobs as the timber and coal industries.

Rayhill credited the upsurge in wind energy demand to the increasing awareness of what he calls the "Al Gore line" on global warming. Whether or not you want to believe the science pointing to climate change, he says, the market for power is experiencing a huge upsurge with regard to wind power.

Is wind a viable base-load energy resource? Rayhill notes that in Denmark, Spain and Germany, wind energy is currently meeting about 15% to 22% of base load. The key is to utilize wind energy where it is. Wind is, of course, variable, but it does not stop, it just changes location.

Rayhill noted that at least 29 other states have developed renewable energy portfolios. Minnesota has a department of three working on attracting renewable energy jobs. They expect to attract 18,000 new jobs. Ohio, with its portfolio, expects 12,000 new jobs. Idaho has not developed a renewable energy portfolio.

Committee members pointed out that transmission capability is a consideration in Idaho. During peak load times, power transmission is at capacity in Idaho. Rayhill explained that data collection and planning help adjust for transmission needs. With the opportunity to switch from wind to hydropower, he said, you can plan power transmission needs precisely and bank water in reservoirs to maximize capacity.

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Senate State Affairs Committee, March 12, 2008

Senator Clint Stennett proposed a concurrent resolution (SCR137) urging the Chicago Climate Exchange to create a rangeland, cropland, grassland region for Idaho to assist the efforts of the Idaho Soil Conservation Commission and the Idaho Carbon Sequestration Committee. These two groups have developed pilot projects that could use rangeland, non-industrial forestland and cropland in trades through the Exchange but Idaho needs to have this designation before anyone could qualify for the exchange program.

The committee voted to print this resolution, which it assigned to the Agricultural Affairs Committee. The committee approved the bill and it was passed by the Senate on a voice vote. It will now go the House of Representatives.

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Senate Resources and Environment, March 14, 2008

HB586, which would set up a statewide auto emissions testing program to help areas whose air quality, could be on the brink of being label non-attainment by the EPA was passed by the House on March 3rd. On Friday, March 14th, the Senate Resources and Environment Committee took up the bill with testimony from most of the same people who supported or opposed the bill before the House Committee. Pete O'Neill, Chairman of the Treasure Valley Air Quality Council spoke of the studies done by the Council that pointed to the need for this type of legislation. Director of the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality testified about the details of the bill and answered technical questions from the committee.

This legislation provides authority to the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality to establish a vehicle emission testing and maintenance program to control air pollution emissions from vehicles in an air shed, which is within 85% of non-attainment, and automobiles are one of two sources of the air pollution. Counties within an air shed can opt out of the emissions testing program if they have other demonstrated technology that will bring down the levels of pollution as well as the emissions testing program can.

After hearing words of support and opposition from others, the committee voted 8 to 1 to support the bill and send it to the Senate floor with a do-pass recommendation. The fact that the EPA has lowered the standard for ozone and smog provided a further push to approve this bill.

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From the Idaho Council on Industry & the Environment (ICIE), *a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to facilitate the use of sound science and facts in shaping public policy on environmental issues..*

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