

# The South – The Next Frontier for Wind Energy

The Southern Wind Energy Association (SWEA) works within an eleven-state region to identify and remove barriers to wind development by focusing on regulatory and legislative advocacy. Wind development throughout the SWEA region has historically lagged due in part to available wind resource, low electricity prices, lack of policy incentives and misinformation regarding wind energy.

However, utilities throughout the south have started to develop a track record with wind energy. **In fact, over 3.5 gigawatts of wind energy power purchase agreements (PPAs) are already in place in the SWEA region due to the ability for wind energy to reduce ratepayer costs.** As utilities become more adept at handling wind energy, they tend to purchase higher quantities of wind power.

With the combination of new turbine technology, policy stability, and the retirement of outdated coal units, **this year is shaping up to be a big year for wind energy in the South.**

## **Integrate Resource Planning**

Major utilities throughout the region will be going through periodical Integrated Resource Planning (IRP) processes. These multi-year IRP processes are used by utilities to evaluate generation resource supply and demand for up to 20-year timeframes. As utilities go through the IRP process, SWEA will engage utilities and provide an industry voice, data and analysis to ensure utility modeling inputs accurately reflect the opportunities and planning requirements for wind energy use. SWEA will also provide access for the wind industry to utility decision makers.

SWEA's IRP advocacy is focused on securing request for proposals (RFP) for significant quantities of renewable energy. Over the past three years, SWEA has engaged in IRPs in Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Tennessee. In the coming year, SWEA will engage in IRPs in Kentucky, Louisiana and Mississippi.

## **Connecting with Government Decision-makers**

Proposed wind farm projects throughout the South have been met with skepticism and untenable state and local regulation. In 2017, SWEA worked in Tennessee to stop excessive wind farm regulation that would have effectively prohibited all future development.

Alternatively, federal incentives and National Environmental Policy Act reviews provide opportunities to highlight the benefits of wind energy and create supportive environments for the wind industry. As such, SWEA will work with elected officials and government agencies to protect and promote wind energy use in the region.



SWEA's Region

## **Transmission Expansion Planning**

The Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) Transmission Expansion Planning (MTEP) process occurs annually. Similar to IRPs, MISO relies on stakeholder feedback regarding technology pricing and performance information. A more robust transmission connection between MISO North/South better enables wind energy purchases from the north to flow south. SWEA is currently the only official MISO-South Environmental Sector stakeholder.

## **Production Tax Credit – Act Now or Lose Billions**

With the long-term extension of the federal Production Tax Credit, it is more important than ever that utilities and regulators understand the benefits of immediately contracting for wind energy resources. An important part of SWEA's advocacy is **ensuing utilities act quickly on securing new wind energy power purchase agreements.**

According to a recent SWEA analysis, billions of dollars in wind power savings will be lost if utilities do not act fast enough to contract for significant amounts of wind power resources. By delaying a single year, utilities could lose at least \$21.7 million on a 100 MW wind energy project. For a 100 MW farm with a 50% capacity factor, this increases to about \$27 million. As capacity factors or the size of the wind energy purchase increases, so do the federal PTC savings.



*The Southern Wind Energy Association (SWEA) promotes wind energy use and development throughout the South. SWEA focuses on onshore wind energy development within the region, as well as importing wind power from outside the region. SWEA identifies and removes barriers to wind development at the federal, state and local levels by focusing on regulatory and legislative work. Encouraging favorable attitudes, regulation and policies for the adoption of wind energy throughout the South is SWEA's primary charge. To learn more about SWEA, visit [southernwind.org](http://southernwind.org) or contact [simon@southernwind.org](mailto:simon@southernwind.org).*