

Clean Energy Powers Rural Iowa's Economy

Waylon Brown • Aug. 8, 2024

There's a reason Iowa features a wind turbine on its license plate. For the Hawkeye State, wind energy symbolizes growth, rural opportunity, and energy independence.

Renewable energy projects, like wind and solar farms, provide many community and economic benefits in rural areas including:

- New jobs
- New and increased local spending infused into the local economy
- Increased local economic output
- Stronger tax revenue streams to rural communities
- Direct payments to landowners through land lease payments
- Increased county and government services

That is why rural communities should be open to renewable energy development opportunities -- they help ensure rural Iowa communities stay rural, yet open for economic prosperity.

How does renewable energy power rural economies?

Utility-scale renewable energy projects are almost exclusively located in rural areas where economic development opportunities can be hard to come by. The communities may be small, but the impact these projects bring is quite the opposite.

According to American Clean Power (ACP), the state's renewable energy industry employs almost 4,000 Iowans with family-supporting jobs. The state has seen over \$24 billion of investments from wind, solar, and energy storage projects, and the industry has invested \$61.2 million annually into local communities through property, state, and local taxes. That's a big deal!

The increased local tax base has enabled communities to invest in local government services, fire protection, parks, public roads, health, and safety services, which benefit the entire area. Additionally, farmers, ranchers, and other private landowners who choose to lease their land to renewable energy developers in Iowa have received extra income of \$72.9 million in drought-proof lease payments. Renewable energy delivers a bright and reliable future for families, farmers, and business owners in Iowa and across the country.

What's at Stake?

While there is much to celebrate, we must also face the fact that Iowa's leadership in attracting clean energy investment is in jeopardy. Why? Because nearly half the counties in the state have developed ordinances and moratoriums discriminating against clean energy development. Each time a county

denies a project, it robs landowners of their private property rights, while simultaneously depriving rural counties of financial resources and eliminating opportunities for lower property taxes. These decisions create business uncertainty, block landowners from economic diversity in their operations, and prevent communities from opting into the significant community investment portfolios that accompany developments.

Notwithstanding the loss of billions of economic investments, grid reliability will also suffer from the lack of new generation, as [MISO recently warned](#) in its annual survey results. Potential for new, large-load data centers and manufacturing facilities - which are tremendous boons to Iowa's economy - would require significant capacity and oftentimes require renewable energy availability. If we cannot meet those demands, we risk passing the economic opportunity to neighboring states.

Iowans are strong, and together, we must embrace the production of clean, affordable, American-made energy. Clean energy supports communities, landowners and plays an important role in America's ability to provide abundant, affordable and reliable electricity for all. This Clean Power Week, join us to celebrate the many ways clean energy powers the economy in our great state!

Other Resources:

[Iowa Reliability Factsheet](#)