

Legislative Issue: Renewable Energy

Iowa's electric cooperatives understand the value renewable energy plays in our overall energy portfolio and in protecting the environment. Iowa's generation and transmission cooperatives (G&Ts) are also investing in renewable energy resources such as wind, methane digesters, landfill gas, soy biodiesel and photovoltaics, as part of their overall generation mix. Here's just a glimpse into a few of the ways RECs are integrating renewables into our systems:

- Iowa's electric cooperatives receive power from 9 separate wind farms.
- All of the G&Ts serving Iowa's electric cooperatives have wind energy in their energy portfolios.
- A G&T serving northeast Iowa co-ops is engaged in operating a 3-megawatt landfill gas facility which provides enough electricity for over 2,600 homes. Prior to the facility's operation, the energy from the methane gas created by the landfill was wasted, simply burned off into the atmosphere. Local air quality will benefit, as the gas will now be harnessed as a "green" energy source.
- Iowa's electric cooperatives are involved in 10 of Iowa's 12 ethanol plants (that currently exist or are in the construction process).

Another way we encourage the ongoing development of renewable resources in Iowa is by working with our member-consumers to interconnect consumer-owned generation units to the power grid. Many factors contribute to a successful interconnection including maintaining the safety, reliability and affordability of our systems. Iowa's electric cooperatives take great pride in ensuring the integrity of these factors and have a streamlined process, which meets state and federal approval, in place to facilitate a smooth interconnection process. We also focus on educating our member-consumers, employees and board members about the process of interconnection through workshops and training seminars, newsletter articles, brochures, letters and one-on-one visits.

Based on our analysis, Iowa's electric cooperatives are steadily increasing the number of consumer-owned generation interconnections on their systems, nearly doubling in 2004 from those interconnected in 2003. These interconnections include wind, photovoltaics and methane. Six renewable energy systems were interconnected in 2003, alone, and in 2004, an additional 10 systems have been interconnected. Iowa's RECs have also worked with member-consumers in installing geothermal systems, which are energy efficient and use a renewable resource. Over 4,000 have been installed in the RECs' territory in Iowa.