

Wind potential brighter with 'Workshop in a Box'

Imagine you are developing a new product to promote the values of wind power. Final details have yet to be worked out, and already folks are clamoring to get their hands on one.

Such is the case for Western's latest renewable-energy information project, and no one could be happier than **Randy Manion**.

"We haven't even advertised yet, and already we have received lots of requests for this," said Manion, manager of Western's Non-Hydro Renewable Resources Program. "It's nothing less than exciting!"

What has Manion excited is the impending arrival of "Wind Energy Workshop in a Box," a how-to kit for those supporting Energy Secretary Bill Richardson's Wind Powering America and wind power itself.

Manion patterned the kit after Interstate Renewable Energy Council's "Solar Energy Workshop in a Box." These kits promote the benefits of the sun as an energy source and are in constant circulation from Western's equipment loan program. With a \$10,000 grant from Western, Manion approached IREC and garnered its expertise to help develop the wind kit.

"We didn't have anything for schools, communities or industry to help people make decisions about buying wind-energy products," said Manion.

With IREC's help and connections to an array of stakeholders, Manion also looked to the Land and Water Fund of the Rockies as an invaluable source for community outreach.

Western also coordinated with the

National Renewable Energy Laboratory, and the American Wind Energy Association—the industry's trade group. Together, these groups developed the wind kit.

Wind Energy Workshop in a Box contains several items for use in presenting wind energy seminars, including brochures, fact sheets, reports, newsletters, case studies, videos and a CD-ROM. A slide show is also in the kit, and information is wide-ranging and nontechnical enough for anyone to use.

The aim was to develop a product easily used by industry as well as school, municipal or other community leaders.

Wind is the fastest-growing energy source in the world. In 1983, the United States reported only two states having large wind energy plants. Today, states with wind farms total 18, and this number is expected to grow in the Great Plains, known to locals as "the Saudi Arabia of Wind."

The costs of starting wind plants have significantly decreased since the 80s, and analysts predict that this cost will fall below most conventional fossil fuel generators in the not-too-distant future. Already, utility customers in many areas are paying a slightly increased fee on their monthly bills to receive energy from wind sources—a good indicator that the public is ready for this clean, efficient alternative.

Wind energy also offers an alternative to conventional power in remote areas worldwide, where it isn't practical to use conventional power resources.

Manion is poised to present the wind box during the Utility Energy Forum in Lake Tahoe next week.

Manion noted that the DOE regional support offices have all been approached to sponsor workshops on how to use the kits. Several offices are on board already.

Ten kits will be produced for Western's equipment loan programs. IREC is also on board to train instructors who, in turn, will train others how to use the kits. ■

