

Congress hears contrasting views on renewable energy outlook

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Promoting Colorado's renewable portfolio standard (RPS), Gov. Bill Ritter told Congress Xcel Energy Inc. will meet the goal of generating 10 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by the end of 2007, nearly eight years ahead of schedule. By contrast, a Southern Co. official said renewable energy prospects are limited in the Southeast.

"Xcel has done what all successful businesses do — it adapted," Ritter said. "While Xcel originally viewed the RPS as a burden, it soon recognized it as an opportunity and the utility now is a great example of the successes that will come from our new energy economy."

In March, Colorado doubled its RPS, setting a goal of 20 percent renewable energy by 2020, Ritter said at a House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming hearing. The new RPS also brings in municipal utilities and Colorado's rural cooperative utilities to meet a 10 percent renewables goal by 2020.

Unlike the West and Southwest, where wind and solar energy resources are abundant, renewable resources are more limited in the Southeast, said Southern Co. Senior Vice President Chris Hobson.

"None of the four states in Southern Company's service area currently have renewable portfolio standards," Hobson said.

However, he noted that Florida is currently evaluating adopting an RPS program proposed by Gov. Charlie Crist. "Southern Company subsidiary Gulf Power Co. is working with the Florida Public Service Commission during its hearing process on an RPS to advance ideas that make sense for the state and its electric customers," Hobson noted.

Hobson said: "To replace 15 percent of just Southern Company's retail energy by 2020 would require approximately 6,900 wind turbines of 2 megawatts capacity each, or 200 square miles of land for solar photovoltaics, or 6,000 square miles of switchgrass fields — an area the size of Connecticut."

Editor's note: APS has submitted a plan for meeting the first five years of the recently-enacted Renewable Energy Standard (RES) to the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC). The standard requires APS to increase its total renewable energy mix to 15 percent by 2025. Additionally, the company has expanded its customer-driven renewable programs. APS customers now have four options — soon to be five — that enable them to build a better tomorrow powered by clean, renewable energy. [More information](#)