



Pacific Northwest Communities Could Exist on Renewable Energy

Island-based nonprofit releases bold study

Bullitt Foundation and UW, among others, back “Energy Independent Communities” Study

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Contact: Lauri Hennessey/Hennessey

(206) 463-1388/(206) 650-4153 (cell)

Vashon, Washington – A Vashon-based nonprofit organization has released a groundbreaking study reporting that the Puget Sound island could profitably make the switch to running on renewable energy (wind, solar, etc.). Furthermore, the Institute for Environmental Research and Education’s (IERE) report maintains that if the island were to make the switch, it would save islanders \$55 Million and create 30 jobs. Application of this approach to the entire state would create 20,000 jobs.

“This report is comprehensive, and it analyzes an array of factors, including the projected prices for fossil and renewable energy in the future, said the Institute’s Executive Director, Rita Schenck. “If this island of 11,000 people were to switch to all renewable energy, our study finds that it could pay for all renewable energy generation costs through energy savings. In addition, our report recommends that Vashon create its own utility district, another important step in gaining true energy independence,” she said.

Schenck said a disciplined approach to conservation, coupled with installation of renewable energy technology, will achieve energy independence within the next 10 years.

“IERE has done the kind of bold, outside-the-box thinking the Bullitt Foundation supports,” said Bullitt Foundation CEO, Denis Hayes. “This path-breaking analysis by Rita Schenck, nationally known for her work on sustainable economic development, shows how a small island can achieve energy independence. Moreover, the whole analysis is pragmatic -- limiting itself to existing technologies, and using extremely conservative estimates about the future of energy prices.” The Bullitt Foundation is

among some very high profile nonprofits, governments and private donors which have contributed to the Institute.

The study found that:

- Fossil energy costs are rising at a rate of four to 13 percent per year, depending on the fuel type;
- Renewable energy generation costs are falling about 2.5% per year;
- Application of existing energy efficiency technologies such as Energy Star appliances, insulation, weatherization, compact fluorescent lighting, and heat pumps can reduce the building-related energy use by over 70%;
- Achieving these savings will require a disciplined, professional, comprehensive application of the technology, but that the savings will yield \$95 Million in avoidance of energy costs on Vashon-Maury Island;
- Once conservation is in place, the island can be powered by about 15 wind turbines, backed by solar PV and biomass generators with a total cost of less than \$40 Million;
- The Vashon-Maury island community supports the concept of renewable energy, including wind turbines, but some wealthy individuals off-island oppose it;
- Transportation energy use is more difficult to address, because with the exception of biodiesel, no generally available automobiles are available that run substantially on renewable energy;
- Moving to energy independence is not only good for the environment but (with the exception of transportation issues) is achievable and economically attractive within 10 years.
- Economic development from implementing the vision of energy independent communities includes development of many small businesses, expansion of community colleges, and increased profits to electric utilities.
- State and local governments have many opportunities to support energy independence.

The first step after the release of the study will be working closely with the Vashon community to study the possibility of advancing energy independence on the island.

The Institute for Environmental Research and Education is a not-for-profit organization that supports fact-based environmental decision-making. It has programs in sustainable agriculture, energy independence, sustainable transportation systems and green buildings, and houses the American Center for Life Cycle Assessment.

The Institute is located at the historic Harrison-Beall Greenhouse Historic District, which it is converting to a center to support sustainable economic development through demonstrations of sustainability technology, education and business incubation.

For more information on the report, contact Rita Schenck at rita@iere.org