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SLC Becomes Utah's Largest Buyer of Wind Electricity

HEATHER MAY THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

With the flip of a switch, Salt Lake City will be planting the equivalent of 116 acres of trees and saving thousands of gallons of water a year. The city is turning to the wind, instead of carbon-dioxide-producing coal, as an electricity source for some of its energy needs -- albeit a small sum.

Every month it will purchase 35,000 kilowatts of wind-generated electricity to be used at the City-County Building, just 10 percent of the structure's energy needs.

Still, Mayor Rocky Anderson heralded the move Wednesday. "This is a major commitment. It is a tremendous example for consumers."

Wind-generated power is pollution-free. The annual amount the city is buying -- the largest purchase in the state to date -- prevents the production of 430 tons of carbon-dioxide emissions that would have been created by using coal-generated electricity.

Carbon-dioxide emissions are considered to be a major cause of global warming. Coal-fired power plants also require more water than the wind-powered ones.

Salt Lake City joins Uinta Brewing Co., Kinko's Copies and the state's energy office in signing up for Utah Power's Blue Sky program.

Almost 4,000 Utah residents also buy the more expensive wind power, which costs \$2.95 more a month for every 100 kilowatt hours. A typical home uses 700 kilowatt-hours a month, so the wind power would add \$20 to their bill.

Anderson hopes even more residents will pick wind power, and plans to send city dwellers a letter touting the benefits.

"Purchasing clear, renewable air power will improve air quality as well as the quality of life," he said, noting the city is now an example for the nation on how to use alternative power sources and reduce global warming.

The mayor also suggested the use of wind power could reduce the nation's dependence on nuclear power. Finding a permanent storage for nuclear waste is a major concern for Anderson, since the waste could travel through his city.

Even though wind power is more expensive, the city is not spending any more money on electricity. It saved \$33,000 when it retrofitted the City-County Building last year to make it more energy efficient. Part of the savings will pay for the wind power.

As more city buildings become energy efficient, the savings will go toward buying wind power, which is generated in Wyoming.

There are no wind-power plants in Utah, though "four to five" wind developers are looking to build, said **Christine Watson**, a state energy engineer.

"Now it's a matter of buying the power," she said.

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