



## State Officials Count on Renewable Energy to Give Economic Jolt

New Mexico sees alternative energy as a path to new jobs for small, rural towns

Posted: 07-May-2009; Updated: 08-May-2009



Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle and business leaders see alternative energy, including wind, solar and biofuels, as a path to new jobs, bigger tax revenues and higher living standards while reducing global warming emissions. It's also a way to promote home-grown power solutions and U.S. energy security.

The [North American Wind Research and Training Center at Mesalands Community College](#) represents a convergence of bipartisan political support with environmental goals.

"Typically, renewable energy generates excitement in the Legislature. This project could help raise New Mexico's status as a leader in clean energy development," said New Mexico state Rep. Brian K. Moore (R-Clayton).

Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), former Rep. Tom Udall (D-NM) (now a U.S. Senator) and Democratic Gov. Bill Richardson worked to secure a \$2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to build the program and staff at Mesalands Community College and pay for the school's wind turbine, built by General Electric. The center is training students as wind energy technicians.

"These kids are guaranteed employment and decent wage right out of college. You can just imagine the economic impact of that," said David Griscom of the Santa Fe-based Regional Development Corp., a non-profit economic development organization.

President Barack Obama's economic stimulus plan together with a cap on global warming pollution will create jobs building America's clean energy future while reducing greenhouse gases. New Mexico is well positioned for this economic opportunity.

### A Silicon Valley for New Mexico

New Mexico generated 496 megawatts of wind energy in 2007, 150 percent more than in 2003. Renewable energy training centers are sprouting on college campuses across New Mexico.

"As many wind farms as there are in this area and wind research facilities, and now a training and research facility, all the parts could come together to create beneficial prospects for New Mexico like there were in Silicon Valley," said Roger Hill, an engineer at the Sandia National Laboratories Wind Energy Technology Department.

Among renewable energy companies putting down roots in New Mexico are photovoltaic solar manufacturers AG Schott and Advent Solar. Meanwhile, SkyFuel Inc. has partnered with Sandia National Laboratories to build a concentrated solar project near Albuquerque.

"This green economy business is not hype at all. It's happening here today and it's happening now," Griscom said.