

A look at 2014's top four advanced energy stories in Ohio

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2014 was a challenging year for advanced energy development in Ohio. Here are some of the year's top stories:

Additionally, opponents of SB 310 raised concern about the composition and timeline of the Energy Mandates Study Committee, which was created under SB 310 and tasked with reviewing the long-term viability of Ohio's renewable energy and energy efficiency standards.

Increased Setback Distances Required for Wind Turbines

1. Freeze of Ohio's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Standards

After months of debate, the legislature passed [Senate Bill 310](#) (SB 310) that places a two-year freeze on annual increases in renewable and energy efficiency standards, holding them at the 2014 levels. While on hold, a committee will evaluate the costs and benefits of keeping the current standards versus adopting revised standards. In addition to the two-year freeze, SB 310 also makes significant changes to energy benchmarks, including ending the requirement that utilities purchase at least half of their renewable energy from within the state.

Even after its passage, SB 310 continues to be embroiled in controversy. Notably, after SB 310 was passed, The Columbus Dispatch revealed that a report commissioned in 2012 by the state's Development Services Agency, which was completed in early 2013, found that Ohio had more than 31,000 "alternative energy economy jobs" a number higher even than the 25,000 jobs that clean-energy proponents cited during the SB 310 debate. Opponents of SB 310 have accused the Kasich administration of deliberately burying this report until after SB 310 was passed.

2. On June 16, Governor Kasich signed [House Bill 483](#) (HB 483) without vetoing a provision that places stricter requirements on where wind turbines are allowed to be built. Specifically, HB 483 alters the setback provisions of Ohio Revised Code Section 4606.20. Under the current law, a wind turbine must have a minimum setback of 1,125 feet from the nearest habitable residential structure. The new law will instead require that wind turbines be a minimum of 1,125 feet from the property lines of the nearest adjacent property at the time of the certificate application. Clean-energy advocates argue that the new setbacks will make it impossible for developers to proceed with \$2.5 billion worth of projects currently under development.

Recently, the new setbacks have been used as a basis for challenges involving two Ohio wind projects before the Ohio Supreme Court, despite the fact that the projects received their certificates from the Ohio Power Siting Board prior to the new setbacks under HB 483 taking effect.

Lake Erie Wind Project Moving Forward Despite Federal Grant Loss

The Lake Erie Energy Development Corporation (LEEDCo) suffered a setback in May when it failed to win a \$47 million federal grant that would have jumpstarted the long-running Icebreaker project. The offshore wind development project planned to install nine three-megawatt wind turbines seven miles off the coast of Cleveland in Lake Erie. Despite this setback, the developers are moving ahead with installing six 18-megawatt wind-turbines off the shore of Lake Erie. Specifically, the U.S. Department of Energy awarded \$2.8 million to LEEDCo to complete the detailed engineering of an

offshore wind turbine foundation optimized for fabrication in the U.S.

Ohio Responds to EPA's Clean Power Plan

On June 2, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), under the authority of the Clean Air Act, proposed the Clean Power Plan (CPP) to reduce carbon pollution from existing electricity-generating power plants. The CPP establishes new rules that would require each state to develop a unique state-specific plan to achieve carbon reduction targets by 2030. On November 26, the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) voted to approve comments prepared for Ohio's first official response to the U.S. EPA's proposed Clean Power Plan; the comments cite several concerns over cost and reliability.

The recent freeze on Ohio's renewable energy and energy efficiency standards may complicate Ohio's ability to comply with the CPP. Recently, PUCO Chairman, Tom Johnson, reported to the Energy Mandates Study Committee that the costs of Ohio's renewable energy and energy efficiency standards make up about 2.25 to 4.75 percent of Ohio residential ratepayers' monthly bills, an amount lower than proponents of SB 310 argued during the SB 310 debate.

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