

Renewables: Is There Potential in Mississippi?

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Renewable energy is a hot topic in the media. Southeastern states have received negative publicity because of their lack of participation in renewable generation projects or for support of legislation mandating renewables.

“Republican senators from the South provided about half the votes that defeated federal legislation to require power companies to get 15 percent of their electricity from renewable sources by 2020. Nationally, almost half the states have adopted their own renewable mandates, but only one, Texas, is in the South,” according to an Associated Press article on July 14, 2007.

Renewable energy effectively uses natural resources such as sunlight, wind, rain, tides and geothermal heat, which are naturally replenished. Renewable energy technologies range from solar power, wind power, hydroelectricity/micro hydro, biomass and biofuels for transportation.

Certain renewables have little to no emissions, making them a favorable generation source from an environmental standpoint; however, the major problem with renewable energy sources is their small output for electric energy generation. Currently, renewables make up about 9.4 percent of the generation in the United States. Hydroelectric power is the largest renewable generation resource at 7 percent.

“The growth in population and disposable income will lead to increased demand for electricity generation through 2030. Efficiency gains will offset some of the need, but an overall 42 percent increase to 5,789 billion kilowatt hours is projected. Coal-fired generation is expected to continue to provide the lion’s share,” according to the Energy Information Administration’s website.

“There is a place for renewables in our industry, and we support efforts to try to develop them to the degree they’re economically and operationally viable,” says Nathan Brown, Chief Operating Officer. “What people need to know, though, is that as desirable as they might be, renewables have limited application in our region.”