

# events



The city of Detroit welcomed attendees and exhibitors to the first dedicated trade show for small and community wind (courtesy of the Detroit Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau).



These plug-n-play home units are located in Mackinaw City, Michigan (courtesy of michiganwindpower.net).

## Michigan

### EYES INVESTMENT AT AWEA'S SMALL & COMMUNITY WIND CONFERENCE

The first trade show dedicated specifically to small and community wind took place in Detroit, Michigan November 3–5. Denise Bode, American Wind Energy Association (AWEA) CEO, was pleased with the turnout for the event and the increasing potential

for this segment of the wind energy market.

“Record attendance at the conference and workshop reflect the increasing importance of the small and community sectors of the industry and the demand for additional wind energy

manufacturing facilities in the United States,” Bode says.

With the automobile engineering and manufacturing expertise—and infrastructure—in Michigan, Detroit seemed the perfect venue to explore

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A Michigan farm employs a single wind unit to cut utility costs (courtesy of michiganwindpower.net).

further wind opportunities in the Midwest. Michigan Governor Jennifer M. Granholm, the keynote speaker at the conference, urged attendees to bring wind-related projects, both big and small, to Michigan.

“We’re turning the so-called rust belt into a green belt of clean energy



Cobo Hall, located in downtown Detroit, drew more than 2,100 attendees for the conference (courtesy of Cobo Hall).

manufacturing,” Granholm says. “We’ve got a robust and growing wind supply chain of more than 70 companies in Michigan already doing hundreds of millions of dollars in business annually. If you’re a wind company looking to invest, we want you in Michigan.”

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation is offering several aggressive financial and economic incentives to alternative energy companies including the 21st Century Job Fund, Michigan NextEnergy Tax Authority, Michigan Green Jobs Initiative and the creation of Renewable Energy Renaissance Zones (Ed’s note: For more information on Michigan’s energy incentives, visit [www.michiganadvantage.org](http://www.michiganadvantage.org)).

In a study provided by the Renewable Energy Policy Project, Michigan is one of the top five states in potential manufacturing job creation from large-scale wind power development. Dan Radomski, vice president of industry

services at NextEnergy, believes small and community wind can also be a turning point in the alternative energy market in Michigan.

“The supply chain is here, from design engineering to automation to assembly. There’s an enormous amount of growth potential. We’re working on a variety of different initiatives to drive down manufacturing costs for wind, solar and bio-thermal technologies right here in Michigan.”

Adds Charles Newcomb, CTO at NexGen, “How can we take the engineering expertise that is put into a \$30,000 automobile in Detroit, and apply it to the design and assembly of a wind turbine? A manufacturing hub like Detroit has what the industry needs to explore further developments in small and community wind.”

This wind segment is a relatively new business model in the United States, though it has been successfully deployed across much of Europe. Community

wind projects allow residents to have a significant amount of control over management, a direct financial stake in the project and a genuine sense of community involvement. These wind projects typically provide 5-20 MW of electricity, although they can range both higher and lower. The basic concept is to provide jobs, wages and business income in communities, since ownership is retained and profits are recycled locally.

The small and community wind industry is growing rapidly, an average of 76 percent per year with a market share expecting to increase significantly by 2012, according to OwnEnergy, a renewable energy developer focused on the mid-sized segment of the wind market. The Brooklyn-based organization enables landowners and communities to build and profit from local wind farms. The recent surge in this specific area of the wind industry was the reason AWEA created a Community Wind Working Group and hosted the inaugural event in Detroit.

Jacob Susman, CEO and founder of OwnEnergy, has ten years of investing and business development experience in the renewable energy field. He's also one of small and community wind's most vocal supporters.

"Small wind is the new big wind," Susman says. "Local investments and state-to-state interest is leading the way, and the growth potential is right here. This is about energy efficiency and job creation, and this segment of the wind industry can offer both."

At the Detroit conference, Bode expressed the importance of this market segment to the wind energy industry as a whole.

"In Detroit, we are giving citizens the tools to take care of their energy future, and showing businesses how they can enter the wind industry, which will create hundreds of thousands of jobs for Americans. With an economic recovery and the right local and federal policies, including a strong renewable electricity standard, there is no limit to what our industry can achieve in producing clean energy and good jobs."

On the state of Michigan's rather lengthy to-do list is an effort to increase wind education, according to Monica Martinez, whom Granholm appointed to the Michigan Public Service



**A vineyard in Leelanau County, Michigan utilizes a low-profile wind turbine (courtesy of michiganwindpower.net).**

Commission in 2005.

"There's some wind fever currently being generated across the state, and we're getting legislation and initiatives passed that will provide wind education to Michigan schools. It's important to get our school districts involved in alternative energy in order to increase community involvement," Martinez says.

At the heart of Michigan is its rich manufacturing history—a history that Granholm believes is a perfect fit for alternative energy applications.

"We know how to make gearboxes and drive trains and brakes; we know how to make that stuff, it's just in a smaller way," Granholm says. "Manufacturing is in the state of Michigan's DNA."

For more information on small and community wind projects, visit [www.awea.org/smallwind](http://www.awea.org/smallwind). 