

Renewables Provide 88% of New U.S. Electrical Generating Capacity in May 2014

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Washington DC – According to the latest “Energy Infrastructure Update” report from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s Office of Energy Projects, wind, solar, biomass, and hydropower provided 88.2% of new installed U.S. electrical generating capacity for the month of May. Two new “units” of wind provided 203 MW, five units of solar provided 156 MW, 1 unit of biomass provided 5 MW, and 1 unit of hydropower provided 0.2 MW.

By comparison, two new units of natural gas provided just 49 MW while no new capacity was provided by coal, oil, or nuclear power. Thus, for the month, renewables provided more than seven times the amount of new capacity as that from fossil fuels and nuclear power.

For the first five months of 2014, renewable energy sources (i.e., biomass, geothermal, solar, water, wind) accounted for 54.1% of the 3,136 MW of new domestic electrical generating installed. This consisted of solar (907 MW), wind (678 MW), biomass (73 MW), geothermal steam (32 MW), and water (8 MW).

During the same time period, coal and nuclear provided no new capacity, while 1,437 MW of natural gas, 1 MW of oil, and 1 MW of “other” provided the balance.

Since January 1, 2012, renewable energy sources have accounted for nearly half (47.83%) of all new installed U.S. electrical generating capacity followed by natural gas (38.34%) and coal (13.40%) with oil, waste heat, and “other” accounting for the balance.

Renewable energy sources, including hydropower, now account for 16.28% of total installed U.S. operating generating capacity: water – 8.57%, wind – 5.26%, biomass – 1.37%, solar – 0.75%, and geothermal steam – 0.33%. This is more than nuclear (9.24%) and oil (4.03%) combined. *

“Some are questioning whether it’s possible to satisfy the U.S. EPA’s new CO₂ reduction goals with renewable energy sources and improved energy efficiency,” noted Ken Bossong, Executive Director of the SUN DAY Campaign. “The latest FERC data and the explosion of new renewable energy generating capacity during the past several years unequivocally confirm that it can be done.”

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission released its most recent 5-page “Energy Infrastructure Update,” with data through May 31, 2014, on June 20, 2014. See the tables titled “New Generation In-Service (New Build and Expansion)” and “Total Installed Operating Generating Capacity” at <http://www.ferc.gov/legal/staff-reports/2014/may-infrastructure.pdf> .

* Note that generating capacity is not the same as actual generation. Actual net electrical generation from renewable energy sources in the United States now totals about 13% according to the most recent data (i.e., as of March 2014) provided by the U.S. Energy Information Administration.