

## **Alaska Needs More Renewable Energy NOW**

### **Consumers deserve a diversified electricity system**

Natural gas prices continue to rise. A great majority of Alaska – 473,000, nearly 71 percent of the state's population, rely on natural gas from Cook Inlet to generate electricity for their homes and businesses. Natural gas prices are expected to increase even faster in the coming years. Consumers need diversified sources for their electricity needs.

Since sponsoring the first gathering on renewable energy in Alaska in 1979, AkPIRG has been pushing for more renewable energy to both mitigate the ever-increasing costs of fossil fuels to consumers and to reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emission those fuels cause. Gas and electric bills in Alaska continue to rise, with the price of gas jumping 30% in just the last year. Consumers will continue to pay higher prices as long as the bulk of our electricity is tied to the volatile prices of fossil fuels.

With new technologies for wind power emerging on a regular basis, the cost of generating electricity from wind has dropped more than 80 percent over the past decade and is the fastest growing sector of America's energy market. The projected cost of electricity for the Fire Island project would be between 6 and 9 cents per kilowatt hour, as compared to the current 8.5 cents per kilowatt hour that is charged. Add to that the fact that there are no fuel costs associated with wind power, and Anchorage could be looking at a project with a long range cost that would be no more than that of building and fueling a comparable gas-fired system.

The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report shows the dangers of our dependence on fossil fuels. Alaska is ground zero for the impacts of climate change. Alaska should be the leader in reducing its carbon emissions by becoming a leader in renewable energy. Not only will this be good for consumers, but it will also help develop the local economy.

AkPIRG is a founding member of the Renewable Energy Alaska Project (REAP). Alaska possesses vast renewable energy potential, some of which has been tapped – with wind turbines above the Arctic circle and Alaska's first geothermal electric plant near Fairbanks. AkPIRG is working to establish and fund a Renewable Energy Fund that will jumpstart more of these projects so that Alaska can begin producing its own clean energy right here at home.

AkPIRG is working to help pass the Renewable Energy Fund bill in this year's legislative session. This bi-partisan bill had wide support across the state. AkPIRG is focused on how consumers will benefit from having renewable energy in the mix of energy choices.

With your help we can get the Renewable Energy Fund established and begin pushing for strong funding of renewable projects.