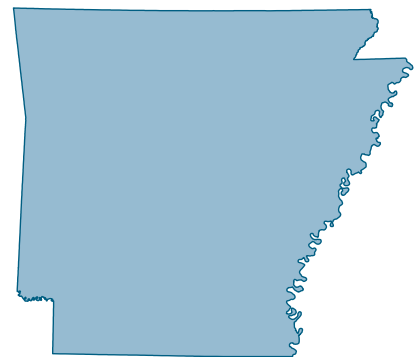




# Department of Energy Recovery Act State Memos

## Arkansas



For questions about DOE's Recovery Act activities, please contact the DOE Recovery Act Clearinghouse:  
1-888-DOE-RCVY (888-363-7289), Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Eastern Time  
<https://recoveryclearinghouse.energy.gov/contactUs.htm>.

*All numbers and projects listed as of June 1, 2010*



**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**RECOVERY ACT SNAPSHOT..... 1**

**FUNDING ALLOCATION TABLE..... 2**

**ENERGY EFFICIENCY ..... 3**

**RENEWABLE ENERGY ..... 4**

**ELECTRIC GRID..... 5**

**TRANSPORTATION ..... 6**

**SCIENCE AND INNOVATION ..... 6**

**RECOVERY ACT SUCCESS STORIES – ENERGY EMPOWERS**

- *Program finds unique way to fund energy upgrades ..... 7*
- *Green collar courses ..... 8*
- *Arkansas prepares for wind power ..... 8*
- *Auto worker cuts energy bill by 1/3 after being laid off..... 9*





# American Recovery and Reinvestment Act



## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY • ARKANSAS RECOVERY ACT SNAPSHOT

Funding for selected DOE projects: \$116.4 million

DOE Recovery Act projects in Arkansas: 30

Clean energy tax credits and grants: 4

For total Recovery Act jobs numbers in Arkansas go to [www.recovery.gov](http://www.recovery.gov)

Arkansas has substantial natural resources, including gas, oil, wind, biomass, and hydroelectric power. The **American Recovery & Reinvestment Act** (ARRA) is making a meaningful down payment on the nation's energy and environmental future. The Recovery Act investments in Arkansas are supporting a broad range of clean energy projects, from energy efficiency and the smart grid to advanced battery manufacturing and renewable energy. Through these investments, Arkansas's businesses, non-profits, and local governments are creating quality jobs today and positioning Arkansas to play an important role in the new energy economy of the future.

### EXAMPLES OF ARKANSAS FORMULA GRANTS

Program	State Energy Program	Weatherization Assistance Program	Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grants	Energy Efficiency Appliance Rebate Program
Award (in millions)	<b>\$39.4</b>	<b>\$48.1</b>	<b>\$19.9</b>	<b>\$2.7</b>
	The Arkansas Department of Economic Development has received \$39.4 million in State Energy Program funds to invest in state-level energy efficiency and renewable energy priorities.	Arkansas has received \$48.1 million in Weatherization Assistance Program funds to scale-up existing weatherization efforts in the state, creating jobs, reducing carbon emissions, and saving money for Arkansas' low-income families. Over the course of the Recovery Act, Arkansas expects to weatherize nearly 5,600 homes. The program also includes workforce training and education as part of the state's efforts to develop a green workforce.	Twenty communities in Arkansas have received a total of \$19.9 million for Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants (EECBG) to develop, promote, implement, and manage local energy efficiency programs.	The Arkansas Economic Development Commission has received \$2.7 million for the Energy Efficient Appliance Rebate Program, which offers consumer rebates for purchasing certain ENERGY STAR® appliances. These energy efficient appliances reduce energy use and save money for families, while helping the environment and supporting the local economy.

### EXAMPLES OF ARKANSAS COMPETITIVE GRANTS AND TAX CREDITS

Award

**\$22.2 million**

**Nordex USA, Inc.** in Jonesboro was awarded a **clean energy manufacturing tax credit** for \$22.2 million to assist with the creation of a wind turbine manufacturing facility.

**\$5.3 million**

**American Railcar Industries** in Marmaduke was awarded a **clean energy manufacturing tax credit** for \$5.3 million to produce steel towers used in wind turbines.

**\$2.4 million**

**Woodruff Electric Cooperative Corporation** in Forrest City received a **\$2.4 million Smart Grid Investment Grant** to harness clean energy sources and integrate them onto a modernized electric grid.

**\$1.6 million**

**Cedarville School District** received \$1.6 million to retrofit heat and cooling systems, increasing energy efficiency at a number of schools.

## Funding Allocation Table (Figure 1)

Total dollar amounts in this document are accurate as of June 1, 2010. Please note that Recovery Act Programs are ongoing and the dollar amounts are subject to change. Recipient locations are based on project sites rather than recipients' headquarters locations.

Recovery Act Pillar	Flagship Program Names & Funding Type <sup>1</sup>	Number of Selections	Selected Amount (in millions) <sup>2</sup>
Energy Efficiency	<i>Weatherization Assistance Program (F)</i>	1	\$48.1
	<i>State Energy Program (F)</i>	1	\$39.4
	<i>Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (F)</i>	20	\$19.9
	<i>Energy Efficient Appliance Rebate (F)</i>	1	\$2.7
	<i>Additional Programs (CM &amp; C)</i>	1	\$1.6
	<b>TOTAL Energy Efficiency</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>\$111.7</b>
Renewable Energy	<i>Additional Programs (F &amp; CM)</i>	1	\$0.5
	<b>TOTAL Renewable Energy</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>\$0.5</b>
Electric Grid	<i>Smart Grid Investment and Demonstrations Project (CM)<sup>3</sup></i>	1	\$2.4
	<i>State and Local Energy Assurance and Regulatory Assistance (F)</i>	2	\$1.3
	<b>TOTAL Electric Grid</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>\$3.7</b>
Transportation	<i>Advanced Fuels (CM)</i>	1	\$0.2
	<b>TOTAL Transportation</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>\$0.2</b>
Science and Innovation	<i>Small Business Research (SBIR/STTR) (CM)</i>	1	\$0.2
	<b>TOTAL Science and Innovation</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>\$0.2</b>
<b>TOTAL - DOE Programs<sup>4</sup></b>		<b>30</b>	<b>\$116.4</b>
Tax Credits/ Payments <sup>5</sup>	<i>Clean Energy Manufacturing Tax Credits (48C)</i>	4	\$35.5
	<b>TOTAL Tax Incentives</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>\$35.5</b>
<b>TOTAL - DOE/Treasury + DOE</b>		<b>34</b>	<b>\$151.9</b>
<sup>1</sup> F=Formula Grant, CM=Competitive Grant, C=Contract			
<sup>2</sup> "Selected" indicates DOE has selected a potential funding recipient, which begins the process of negotiating an agreement. This does not necessarily indicate that a final agreement has been reached.			
<sup>3</sup> Projects may cross state boundaries, signifies HQ location.			
<sup>4</sup> Total does not include administrative funds.			
<sup>5</sup> Jointly administered by DOE and the U.S. Department of Treasury.			

## **ENERGY EFFICIENCY – 24 projects totaling \$111.7 million**

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*Helping millions of American families cut utility bills by making homes and appliances more energy efficient, expanding the home efficiency industry in sales and manufacturing. For more information, visit <http://www.energy.gov/recovery/energyefficiency.htm>.*

### **Award(s): \$48.1 million, Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)**

#### **Location: Statewide**

Arkansas received \$48.1 million in Weatherization Assistance Program funds to scale-up existing weatherization efforts in the state, creating jobs, reducing carbon emissions and saving money for Arkansas' low-income families. Over the course of the Recovery Act, Arkansas expects to weatherize nearly 5,600 homes. The Arkansas Office of Community Services is administering the program in conjunction with fifteen local organizations to provide weatherization assistance to all 75 counties across the state. These organizations are also conducting energy audits and re-weatherization services for 500 additional housing units. The program also includes workforce training and education as part of the state's efforts to develop a green workforce.

### **Award(s): \$39.4 million, State Energy Program (SEP)**

#### **Location: Statewide**

The Arkansas Department of Economic Development received \$39.4 million in State Energy Program (SEP) funds to invest in state-level energy efficiency and renewable energy priorities. Arkansas is using its Recovery Act SEP funding to reduce energy consumption and advance energy independence by implementing a number of significant energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. These programs are creating and supporting green jobs within the state. Arkansas is using its funding to encourage investment in energy efficiency technologies in a number of critical sectors within the state. Arkansas is also implementing several other energy efficiency projects designed to facilitate and incentivize energy savings for its constituents.

### **Award(s): 22 totaling \$19.9 million, Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program (EECBG)**

#### **Location: Statewide**

**Recipients:** Benton, Fayetteville, North Little Rock, Conway, Crawford, Crittendon County Landfill, Arkansas Department of Economic Development, Fort Smith, Garland, Hot Springs National Park, Jonesboro, Little Rock, Lonoke, Pine Bluff, Pope, Pulaski, Rogers, Saline, Springdale, White

Twenty-two communities in Arkansas received a total of \$19.9 million for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants Program (EECBG) to develop, promote, implement and manage local energy efficiency programs.

The grants, funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, help cities and counties save energy and money in their local communities. In addition to U.S. Department of Energy plan approval, EECBG programs often must be approved by the local city council or board of supervisors. Examples of EECBGs include:

- **North Little Rock - \$599,000**

North Little Rock is running seven programs designed to offer a broad mix of opportunities for citizens and local businesses to reduce energy use and emissions. Projects range from residential and commercial appliance rebates to street lighting upgrades and studies examining the energy

saving potential of municipal lighting improvements, alternatively fueled vehicles and advanced metering systems.

- **Conway - \$565,000**

Conway is funding six projects through the EECBG program: two revolving loans will assist existing homeowners and residential builders in making qualified energy improvements to the housing stock, blower-door testing equipment will allow city-owned utility to perform more accurate free home energy audits, a science curriculum for all seventh grade students (public and private) will educate the population in saving energy at home, LED traffic lights will aid in the reduction of energy costs for the city and traffic synchronization software and equipment will save vehicle emissions.

- **Pine Bluff - \$502,000**

Pine Bluff is replacing traffic light fixtures at 62 intersections updating 1,000 light fixtures in 23 city-owned buildings, weatherizing three fire stations and a police precinct and replacing doors, windows and heating and air conditioning units.

**Award(s): \$2.7 million, Energy Efficient Appliance Rebate Programs**

**Location: Statewide**

The Arkansas Economic Development Commission received \$2.7 million for the Energy Efficient Appliance Rebate Program which offers consumer rebates for purchasing certain ENERGY STAR® appliances. These energy efficient appliances reduce energy use, save money for families, help the environment and support the local economy.

Arkansas residents who replace an existing appliance with a new ENERGY STAR appliance are eligible to apply for the rebate. Appliances covered under the rebate include refrigerators, clothes washers and water heaters. This program ends as soon as funds are exhausted.

**Award(s): \$1.6 million, Ground Source Heat Pumps**

**Location: Cedarville**

Cedarville School District received \$1.6 million to retrofit heat and cooling systems at a number of schools, reducing utility costs and providing regional economic growth.

## **RENEWABLE ENERGY – 4 projects totaling \$36 million**

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*Developing the clean renewable resources in order to double our supply of renewable energy and boost domestic renewable manufacturing capacity. For more information, visit <http://www.energy.gov/recovery/renewableenergy.htm>.*

**Award(s): 4 totaling \$35.5 million from DOE / Treasury, Clean Energy Manufacturing Tax Credit (48C)**

**Location: Statewide**

- **Nordex USA, Inc., Jonesboro - \$22.2 million**

Nordex USA, Inc., in Jonesboro received \$22.2 million to assist in the creation of a wind turbine manufacturing facility. This project is building wind turbines to generate renewable energy and creating hundreds of new jobs.



- **American Railcar Industries, Marmaduke - \$5.3 million**  
American Railcar Industries in Marmaduke received \$5.3 million to re-equip a manufacturing plant for the production of 500 structural steel towers per year. These towers are used for large-scale commercial wind turbines.
- **Mitsubishi Power Systems Americas, Inc., Fort Smith - \$5.1 million**  
Mitsubishi Power Systems Americas, Inc., in Fort Smith received \$5.1 million to create a new facility that will manufacture nacelles for wind turbines.
- **Porocel Industries, LLC, Little Rock - \$2.9 million**  
Porocel Industries, LLC, in Little Rock received \$2.9 million to construct and operate a plant for drying, grinding, calcining and packaging for material used in Conoco Phillips' CPrime® Anode. The result will aid in maintaining competitive domestic battery manufacturing capabilities.

**Award(s): \$450,000, Hydroelectric Facility Modernization Program**

**Location: North Little Rock**

The City of North Little Rock received \$450,000 to acquire and implement automated industrial equipment including an intake cleaning system and wood grinder at Murray Hydroelectric Plant.

## **MODERNIZING THE ELECTRIC GRID – 3 projects totaling \$3.7 million**

*Harnessing clean energy sources and integrating them onto a modernized electric grid, while giving consumers better choices and more control over their energy use. For more information, visit <http://www.energy.gov/recovery/smartgrid.htm>.*

**Award(s): \$462,000, Enhancing State and Local Governments' Energy Assurance**

**Location: Little Rock**

The Arkansas Department of Economic Development in Little Rock received \$462,000 for State Energy Assurance planning. This project focuses on building regional energy assurance capability by enhancing inter- and intra- state coordination and cooperation during energy emergencies. The project funds states to update or develop State Energy Assurance Plans incorporating new energy portfolios such as wind, renewables and biofuels. The project also funds cities to update or develop Local Energy Assurance Plans. The two sets of funding are used to hire or retrain staff to build in-house expertise in dealing with Smart Grid technologies, critical energy infrastructure interdependencies and cyber-security.

**Award(s): \$2.4 million, Smart Grid Investment Grant Program (EISA 1306)**

**Location: Forrest City**

Woodruff Electric Cooperative Corporation in Forrest City received \$2.4 million to harness clean energy sources and integrate them onto a modernized electric grid, while giving consumers better choices and more control over their energy use. Woodruff Electric is using these funds to install smart meters for more than 13,000 electric cooperative customers, providing time-of-use data, monitoring demand and reducing outages.

**Award(s): \$823,000, State Assistance on Electricity Policies**

**Location: Little Rock**

The Arkansas Public Service Commission in Little Rock received \$823,000 for the State Public Utility Commissions to assist in addressing its Recovery Act electricity workload by hiring staff trained to facilitate the review of time-sensitive requests approving electric utility expenditures.

## **TRANSPORTATION – 1 project totaling \$200,000**

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*Investing in a new generation of advanced fuels and vehicles to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and revitalize domestic manufacturing. For more information, visit <http://www.energy.gov/recovery/vehicles.htm>.*

**Award(s): \$200,000, Investigation of Intermediate Ethanol Blends, Optimization of E-85 Engines and Development of Transportation Infrastructure**

**Location: Statewide**

Protec Fuel Management, LLC, received \$200,000 to develop infrastructure that will result in an additional five dispensers capable of delivering blends up to E85.

## **SCIENCE AND INNOVATION – 1 project totaling \$150,000**

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*Renewing our commitment to science and innovation to ensure global competitiveness in the future. For more information, visit <http://www.energy.gov/recovery/innovation.htm>.*

**Award(s): \$150,000, Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) / Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) Round 1**

**Location: Fayetteville**

Nanomech, LLC, in Fayetteville received \$150,000 to scale-up the commercialization of novel nanoparticles-based lubricant additives for harsh boundary lubrication regimes (ball bearings, gears and other related equipment). The program will save hundreds of millions of dollars from fuel, reduced vehicle exhaust emission, reduced friction and wear. Ultimately the program will improve energy efficiency and durability of US industries.

ENERGYEMPOWERS.GOV

# Recovery Act Success Stories

Energy Empowers is a U.S. Department of Energy clean energy information service. Our team produces stories featuring the people and businesses that are fueling the energy transformation and economic recovery in America. For more stories from your state, go to [energyempowers.gov/Arkansas](http://energyempowers.gov/Arkansas)



L'Oréal USA facility in North Little Rock, Ark., is participating in a first-of-its-kind energy efficiency program that loans employees money to perform upgrades | Photo courtesy of L'Oréal

## NORTH LITTLE ROCK

### Program finds unique way to fund energy upgrades

The \$40 million of Recovery Act funds used for weatherizing more than 6,500 homes over the next two years in Arkansas is a welcomed boost, but Martha Jane Murray of the Clinton Foundation is thinking bigger.

“How do we create a more robust delivery system that is not just relying on federal dollars,” asks Martha Jane, the program director for the foundation’s Arkansas Clinton Climate Initiative (CCI AR).

For CCIAR, one answer is the Home Energy Affordability Loan, or HEAL, program.

In a unique approach to help chip away at the list of homes in need of weatherization and lower industrial energy consumption, CCIAR developed a loan program in which employees borrow money from employers for energy efficiency upgrades. The employers fund the loans using money saved through their own energy-efficiency projects.

The L'Oréal USA facility in North Little Rock, Ark., is the first location to test the program, which is being financed with a portion of the \$2 million of Recovery Act funds awarded to CCI AR. The company is self financing lighting retrofits in exchange for offering 100 employees energy audits and subsequent loans to perform the upgrades.

“The goal is replication,” Martha Jane says. “The CCIAR would like to implement this type of revolving loan program in companies all over Arkansas and the country.”

Here’s how it works: If a business qualifies to participate in the HEAL program, it receives a free commercial audit and access to a fixed amount of funds from the HEAL zero-interest loan fund for the retrofit. In return, the business agrees to provide zero interest loans for employees—either by putting the money upfront or using

energy savings to fund the loans—so workers can improve energy efficiency in their homes. CCI AR provides one-stop coordination for these audits and upgrades for the employees. The employee then pays back the employer in payroll deductions with the money they have saved on their energy bills every month.

“A lot of those folks would not go to a bank to get energy loans,” Martha Jane says. “But if it’s brought to the workplace, it eliminates a lot of the drudge factors.”

The idea for the program came to Martha Jane after Hurricane Katrina. She was involved in a rapid rebuilding project of 44 energy-efficient homes in 100 days in New Orleans—saving those homeowners an average of 50 percent on their utility costs. “It occurred to me that there were people everywhere who could benefit from this, beyond what the weatherization program can provide,” Martha Jane says. She wanted to

help low and middle income residents upgrade their homes, so she started with the employees in her husband’s shoe factory in Wynne, Ark.

A commercial energy audit and upgrade was performed and was projected to save the factory \$40,000 a year. Martha Jane then convinced her husband to put the savings into a revolving loan for their employees. They loaned 12 employees up to \$2,000 each to perform upgrades. “We had zero loan defaults,” Martha Jane says.

Satisfied with the results, Martha Jane and CCI AR wanted to take the program to a full-fledged pilot phase. Arkansas’ L'Oréal USA facility seemed like the best fit.

“This was a marriage made in heaven,” Martha Jane says.

L'Oréal is among the greenest companies in the state. The company’s North Little Rock facility pulls all of its energy from a hydrodam and received upgrades, including light-emitting diodes for exit signs and energy-efficient equipment, such as variable speed



Energy-audit crew visits a L'Oréal employee’s home in Little Rock, Ark. | Photo courtesy of Rob Moody, Organic Think, Inc.

drives for a chiller.

“Doing this kind of work is not new for us,” says David Lovejoy, engineering director at the L’Oréal facility in North Little Rock. “And our employees are very progressive in sustainable matters.”

In April, 100 of those employees started receiving free home energy audits. Based on income, the families will be eligible to receive retrofit implementation assistance from trained AmeriCorps service members (part of the CCI AR comprehensive HEAL program.)

*“A lot of those folks would not go to a bank to get energy loans,” Martha Jane says. “But if it’s brought to the workplace, it eliminates a lot of the drudge factors.”*

“There is barely any out-of-pocket cost to the employees,” David says. Working with CCI AR and the facility to determine energy savings, employees will be able to pay back the loans by way of payroll deductions.

“A lot of those folks would go to a bank to get energy loans, but if it’s brought to the workplace, it eliminates a lot of the drudge factors.” — Martha Jane Murray of the Clinton Climate Initiative

Martha Jane calls it an “alternative path for weatherization.” While the Weatherization Assistance Program provides money for those at or below 200 percent the federal poverty line, this program is open to middle income residents as well. It also saves energy and money for both companies and their employees.

CCI AR is looking for three more companies in Arkansas’ 1st, 3rd and 4th Congressional Districts to participate in pilot projects.

#### NORTH LITTLE ROCK

### Green collar courses coming to state

When more green jobs start to open up in northwest Arkansas, educators want to ensure they have the workforce to fill them.

In anticipation of a growing sector, Bentonville’s Northwest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) and Pulaski Technical College in North Little Rock are adding new green courses that will train about 600 people during the next three years to be certified energy auditors and weatherization workers.

The colleges received a total of \$2.4 million in grants from the Department of Energy to establish the Green Collar Workforce Center on their campuses.

The short-course certification classes will focus on energy auditing and rating, weatherization, and energy-efficient heating and cooling to teach professionals about the “science of the building,” says Rick Mayes, director of building sciences at NWACC.

Arkansas plans to weatherize 6,500 homes by 2012 with Recovery Act funds, and the green jobs sector will expand as a result. But Rick is looking towards the future. “We want to make this sustainable,” he says. Rick says the program will first be geared towards professionals looking to transition into the industry but then evolve into something more.

“Eventually, it will offer a plethora of things,” he says. “We want to show how students—even starting in high school—can have a career pathway [in this line of work].”

To help develop a strong curriculum, the colleges are reaching out to organizations recognized as authorities on best practices and standards in the industry. Joining forces with organizations like

Residential Energy Services Network, or RESNET, a federally recognized standards making body for energy efficiency rating systems, will bring credibility to the content and certification, Rick says.

A satellite training center for the community college will be located in Fayetteville, a few miles from Bentonville. Rick says Fayetteville Mayor Lioneld Jordan was influential in getting the grants for the training center projects.

“This was his number one priority when he came into office,” says John Coleman, the city’s sustainability director. “He has a strong connection to construction in the area and sees the issues they are dealing with now.”

Like most areas in the country, construction jobs are down, with many unemployed workers scrambling for work. College and city officials hope people will flock to the programs to increase their chances of landing a job.

“It’s important for us to get out in front and have a workforce capable of understanding what is coming up,” John says. “We want to provide a workforce to interested companies.”

John says the city is also seeking grants from the Department of Labor to establish scholarships for the training centers.

Describing the new additions as “building training centers of excellence,” Governor Mike Beebe announced the green collar workforce centers in February.

“These are the types of jobs that are changing in the 21st-century economy,” said Gov. Beebe, “and we will soon have hundreds of Arkansans better prepared to pursue new opportunities in expanding career fields that embrace energy-efficiency innovations.”

### Arkansas prepares for wind power

Renowned science fiction author Isaac Asimov once said, “No sensible decision can be made any longer without taking into account not only the world as it is, but the world as it will be.”

In Arkansas, state energy leaders are taking that advice and gathering the best possible data by which future developers can make decisions about the potential of wind energy in the state. While there are zero megawatts of wind power currently installed in Arkansas, gathering such data is crucial in showcasing the state’s abilities to harvest wind.

“Because no publicly available wind data are available at commercial hub heights in Arkansas ... you can’t really have an informed debate regarding the viability of commercial-scale wind development,” Jenny Ahlen, Renewable Energy Programs coordinator for the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, says. “Our hope is to not only collect this data, but to identify some areas in Arkansas where commercial-scale wind development makes sense from both an environmental and economic standpoint and then do what is necessary to encourage its development.”

Officials with the Wind Working Group at Arkansas’ State Energy Office utilized the Technical Assistance Project, a U.S. Department of Energy seminar that explores state policies and analytical tools to help those officials advance renewable energy programs in their state. This particular seminar helped identify favorable areas for installing tall towers that will collect wind data at commercial-scale heights. The project identified 82 contiguous suitable locations in the Ozark and Ouachita mountains and in the Mississippi River Valley where testing could begin.

The Recovery Act has now provided the state with \$500,000 to



move forward with its Tall Tower Wind Measurement Study, and Jenny Ahlen, renewable energy programs coordinator for the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, says her office is finalizing requests for proposals that will be released in the coming weeks.

Jenny says working on renewable energy projects in her home state is a great opportunity.

“It’s a really exciting time to work in this field,” she says. “Wind turbines and other renewable energy technologies still have

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*“It’s a really exciting time to work in this field ... there’s only room for improvement and growth.”* — Jenny Ahlen, Arkansas Economic Development Commission

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a relatively low penetration rate in Arkansas, which means there’s only room for improvement and growth. Gov. Mike Beebe strongly supports renewable energy, and he’s helped usher in a number of wind manufacturing companies.”

The DOE estimates Arkansas could see 1,000 MW of installed wind capacity by 2030 and 268 new long-term jobs, \$2.7 million per year in payments to landowners and \$9.3 million per year in local property tax revenue, according to the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy’s “20 Percent Wind Energy by 2030” report.

#### TYRONZA

#### Auto worker cuts energy bill by 1/3 after being laid off

The wind used to howl around the doors and through the attic of Thomas Lee’s house. It’s an older brick home with poor insulation located just outside the city limits of Tyronza, Ark. The furnace never seemed to kick off in the winter, and keeping his family warm was a constant battle, Thomas says, one that cost him close to \$100 extra each month in the winter.

Thomas is 51 years old and lives with his wife and two teenage sons. When his two-bedroom home was weatherized in August, the 15-year U.S. Navy veteran experienced the effects of the Recovery Act first-hand when he could really use it.

After his 13-year auto manufacturing job, where he was most recently a general foreman of a team making water pumps for new cars, moved to China in July 2007, Thomas needed a lucky break.

“It was very disheartening seeing the company where I had been so long just shut its doors,” he says. “I understand the folks in charge of it all were trying to make a profit – and they treated us right with

a nice severance package – but I’m not going to be able to find the job I had without a college degree.”

After a few months, Thomas went to work at his local big-box store while he looked for other jobs. He soon found another manufacturing job building conveyors at a company in neighboring Jonesboro — just in time for them to lay him off with 400 other employees in January 2009. Feeling insecure in the manufacturing industry, Thomas went back to the big-box chain where he and his wife now work (at separate locations). With a significantly reduced income than what the couple was used to, paying high electric bills suddenly became tougher to do.

All that changed when one of Thomas’ friends told him about the income qualifications to have a home weatherized. Soon, Thomas and his mother, whom he helped to apply, both had been approved.

Weatherization workers performed tasks such as replacing windows, insulating air ducts and switchboxes, caulking gaps and testing the efficiency of appliances. Now, Thomas’ electric bill is \$146 for October, compared to \$219 last year for the same month.

“We haven’t changed anything else,” he says. “We’re just doing what it takes to keep the house comfortable, but we can do that now without having to have heating or air conditioning on such extreme settings.”

He and his wife will find it easier to make ends meet now that their energy costs are down. They’ve also been saving money to take their two teenage sons on a vacation.

“My wife and I have really wanted to go on a vacation with them,” Thomas says. “We might not have to wait so long now.”

Thomas says weatherization is a necessity for any homeowner.

“I didn’t know how much I was losing not having an air-tight home. I didn’t think about the leakage in the house,” he says. “I wish I’d done this 10 years ago.”

Thomas was also impressed that the work was done quickly by the weatherization team and that, except for upgrade, they left his house exactly as they had found it, he says.

Through the end of September 2009, the Weatherization Assistance Program has improved more than 170 low-to-moderate-income homes in Arkansas with funds received under the stimulus bill, says Arkansas state weatherization manager Larry Palmer. The program there is nearing full production and should weatherize more than 5,000 homes through 2012, according to Larry.

“The stimulus funds are a much-needed gift that we’ve been hoping for because weatherization is a program of proven efficiency and effectiveness that brings immeasurable improvements to homes, and now we can help many more,” he says.