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from: Mark Nixon
Communications Director
phone: 702-6735 email: mdn@lbwl.com

BWL creates breakthrough renewable energy policy

The Lansing Board of Water & Light has adopted a renewable energy policy that is believed to be a first for any Michigan-based utility.

The BWL's governing Board of Commissioners on Tuesday unanimously approved the creation of the renewable energy policy, which will consist of energy sources such as wind-generated electricity. The policy sets specific goals for increased reliance on renewable energy sources.

"The BWL is part of a growing trend among utilities that are exploring renewable energy options," said BWL Interim General Manager Dick Peffley. "We join Gov. Jennifer Granholm and others calling for exploring more renewable energy options. It's an important and attainable challenge facing this nation, the state of Michigan and the Greater Lansing community."

The policy – often referred to in the industry as a Renewable Portfolio Standard – specifically sets in place these goals for acquiring electricity from renewable energy sources:

- Generate or purchase 2 percent of the BWL's electric retail sales by December 31, 2008.
- Generate or purchase 5 percent of the BWL's electric retail sales by December 31, 2012.
- Generate or purchase 7 percent of the BWL's electric retail sales by December 31, 2016.

A study conducted for the BWL concluded that not only is increased reliance on renewable energy sources environmentally desirable, but that it is making greater economic sense as well.

Wind-generated electricity or biomass generation from landfills are two possible sources of renewable energy. The BWL will explore investing in such projects, or purchasing renewable energy from other sources.

To a modest degree, the BWL already has renewable energy sources up and running. It recently repowered its hydroelectric dam on the Grand River near the Eckert Power Station. The BWL also has an agreement to buy power from two hydroelectric dams in northern Michigan's Cheboygan County.

These initiatives provide "green" energy for the BWL's GreenWise energy program. Through GreenWise, customers can buy electricity generated from renewable energy sources. For details, go to the BWL's Web site, www.lbwl.com.

The new renewable energy policy greatly expands the opportunity for BWL customers' homes and businesses to be powered by "green" energy sources.

The BWL has more than 97,000 electric customers in the Greater Lansing area.

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