

Mass. governor unveils big push for wind power

By **STEVE LeBLANC** Associated Press Writer © 2009 The Associated Press

Jan. 14, 2009, 5:31AM

BOSTON — Wind turbines would increasingly dot the Massachusetts landscape under a plan unveiled by Gov. Deval Patrick to ramp up the state's reliance on wind power over the next dozen years.

Patrick said Tuesday he wants the state to be producing 2,000 megawatts of wind electricity annually by 2020, enough to power 800,000 homes — or about 10 percent of the state's current energy needs. The state has just nine major wind turbines now, producing less than seven megawatts of power annually.

Patrick pointed to recent successes in helping jump-start the state's solar power industry, including the popularity of a state rebate program designed to encourage homeowners to install solar panels on their homes

"Now is the time to turn to wind power," Patrick said.

The country's wind-power capacity has increased by 500 percent in the past 10 years, to just over 21,000 megawatts, according to the American Wind Industry Association. A one-megawatt wind turbine can generate enough electricity in a year to power up to 300 homes for a year.

Patrick's proposal would put Massachusetts among the majority of states with some wind-power production. Texas is tops, with 6,300 megawatts of existing capacity spread over dozens of wind farms.

There are 300 turbines in various planning and permitting stages in Massachusetts, including a proposal by Cape Wind Associates to build 130 windmills across 25 miles of federal waters in Nantucket Sound — enough to generate an estimated 420 megawatts of power.

Patrick said that increasing reliance on wind power will lure businesses and jobs to the state and help make Massachusetts a leader in clean energy technology. The state has already been selected by the U.S. Department of Energy for one of two wind turbine testing centers.

But wind power has come under fire from those who say the long, spindly-armed turbines mar the landscape and can harm migrating birds.

Critics of the Cape Wind project, including Sen. Edward Kennedy, have battled for years to try to block the project, in part by saying its location in Nantucket Sound will ruin views off of Cape Cod.

But supporters say that wind turbines are inevitable as the state — and country — weans itself off carbon-emitting fossil fuels.

"If you look at the environmental impact of coal-fired power plants and think about all the kids who have asthma and the trade-off of getting accustomed to a new landscape for clean energy, the vast majority of Massachusetts residents are

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