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Conservation, Renewables and Natural Gas Top Utility Plans

Loads continue to grow and electric utilities plan ways to bolster supply

Portland, Ore. Northwest utilities are working diligently to narrow the gap between the existing electricity supply and what they will need to serve their customers over the next 10 years. According to PNUCC's 2009 Northwest Regional Forecast (NRF), released today, utilities added 1,000 average megawatts of energy resources between 2007 and 2009.

Natural gas and wind projects figured prominently in the resources acquired. The NRF also indicates utilities' investments in conservation are reducing demand by about 150 to 200 average megawatts a year.

"Despite the economic downturn, utilities expect load to continue to grow in the Northwest," PNUCC's deputy director Shauna McReynolds stated. "Utilities' resource plans reflect some slowdown in the near term, but the pace is projected to pick up again," she said. Overall, including expected conservation savings, loads are forecast to grow about 270 average megawatts annually.

Utilities have plans on the drawing board for 5,400 average megawatts to meet the region's growing demand. The focus is on conservation, which makes up over one-third of the planned efforts, with natural gas generation providing over 25 percent of the total and wind contributing over 20 percent.

Every year, PNUCC produces the NRF, which reflects the utilities' view of the future for load growth and electricity supply in the region. The 2009 NRF shows that utilities need to continue to add resources to meet their customers' electricity demand over the next 10 years.

More information and a copy of the 2009 NRF is on the PNUCC website at www.pnucc.org.

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