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University of Pennsylvania, Largest University Buyer Of Wind Energy in the Nation, Triples Its Purchase

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PHILADELPHIA -- Under a new agreement, the University of Pennsylvania will now purchase nearly 30 percent of its energy needs from wind-generated power, nearly tripling its wind-energy purchase.

Following a previous wind-energy purchase of 40,000 megawatt-hours annually from Pennsylvania wind farms, Penn's new agreement to purchase 112,000 MWh each year for the next five years from wind farms across the country represents the largest retail purchase of green power in the nation by an institution of higher education.

"Research has shown that wind-powered energy is a safe, non-polluting alternative to electricity produced by fossil fuels," Penn President Amy Gutmann said. "We at Penn are pleased to be a national leader in clean energy and in the development of the wind-generated power industry in the state. Through this environmental stewardship, we can continue to raise the awareness of our students and the community about alternative fuel options."

The 112,000 MWh -- about a third of the 412,000 MWh the University uses annually -- is enough to power nearly 10,500 average American homes for a year.

Penn has been a leading organization in purchasing wind energy, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Penn has also been on EPA's Top 25 list of national green power purchasers since the list was begun. Penn's new commitment will move the University up to No. 8 nationally.

"EPA applauds the University of Pennsylvania for its role as a green power leader, not only amongst its peers in the Ivy League, but for higher education institutions across the nation," Blaine Collison, program director for EPA Green Power Partnership, said. "Penn's purchase supports America domestic supply of clean, renewable energy."

This new agreement is part of an on-going campaign at Penn to become greener and to show its commitment to a sustainable environment. The Penn student group Green Campus Partnership has been engaged in this effort that includes recycling audits and lobbying for more efficient energy usage.

"There has been a lot of talk recently about universities' responsibilities not only to instruct their students about environmental stewardship but to practice such stewardship," Robert Giegengack, professor of earth and environmental science at Penn, said. "This has translated into student campaigns to increase recycling or to establish bike paths, but relatively little attention has been paid to a university's biggest impact on the environment: its energy appetite."

Penn's previous significant wind energy -purchases, supplied by Exelon-Community Energy Wind Farms in Pennsylvania, catalyzed the industry in the state, spurring the development of additional renewable generation facilities. Because purchases of green power support the development of new renewable generation facilities, Penn's latest commitment is expected to have the same effect nationally.

"Penn continues to lead the way at a time when our energy and climate future demands strong leaders," Brent Alderfer, president of Community Energy Inc. of Wayne, Pa., said. "Penn's decision to step up to a top-10 national-level wind purchase sets a new benchmark in higher education."