

The Sensible Environmentalist

GET INTO “GREEN” POWER

(NAPSA)—**DEAR DR. MOORE:**

Can individual home owners use wind energy to produce electricity?

Although residential systems are available, installing a wind turbine isn't cost effective for individual home owners. However, you can support and encourage this important source of clean and renewable energy by creating market demand.



Dr. Moore

In many parts of the country, utilities offer “green pricing” programs, through which consumers pay a premium to ensure that some of their power comes from environmentally friendly sources—such as wind farms, solar systems and landfill gas. In addition to encouraging investment in clean and renewable energy, some programs offer fixed electricity rates for the length of the contract (often many years). As fossil fuels become more expensive, you may actually end up spending less for electricity than with the non-“green” rate.

In jurisdictions that allow competition, consumers may also have the option of buying wind and other forms of clean energy from alternative suppliers. However, if you're set on having an individual system, the most economical option is geothermal energy, which uses a ground source heat pump to heat and cool the home using energy from the earth. Since geothermal systems use small

amounts of electricity, a combination of a ground source heat pump and green pricing program allows some home owners to rely 100 percent on renewable energy sources.

Environmentally, wind energy doesn't cause air or water pollution, and uses small amounts of water. As it becomes more popular, it will also reduce the impact of fossil fuel based plants, which emit huge amounts of carbon dioxide and other pollutants.

That's not to say that wind farms have zero impact. Depending on location, for example, there has been concern over birds flying into turbines. But today's turbines turn more slowly than their predecessors, and cause few deaths—far less than domestic cats or cars. Nonetheless, it makes sense to avoid migration routes, wildlife corridors and other environmentally sensitive areas.

As a sensible environmentalist, I encourage the use of renewable energy and materials whenever possible. With its environmental and economic benefits, it makes sense that wind energy is one of the fastest growing segments in the clean energy movement. For more information, visit the Green Power Network at www.eere.energy.gov/greenpower.

Dr. Patrick Moore has been a leader of the environmental movement for more than 30 years. A co-founder of Greenpeace, he holds a PhD in ecology and a BSc in forest biology. Questions can be sent to Patrick@SensibleEnvironmentalist.com.