**ENERGY2414.mp3**

[00:00:03] **Speaker 1** Yeah, the good news is we're not doing it. Wind turbines are back in action in Wisconsin. The State Public Service Commission has approved the first big wind farm since 2011. The Badger Hollow wind project with 19 turbines will complement the state's largest solar project by the same name in Iowa County. The PSC at the same time approved a solar project in Whitewater. Meanwhile, the federal government cut $7.5 billion from green energy projects in several states, not including Wisconsin, just this week. Against that backdrop, renewable energy advocates consider the latest approvals in Wisconsin a major win. Chelsea Chandler with Clean Wisconsin joins us with more. Thanks very much for being here. Thanks for having me. So are these latest projects kind of outside the budget axes at the federal level?

[00:01:07] **Speaker 2** There's an approval process that happens for these projects within Wisconsin. The projects over 100 megawatts, these large projects, get approved by the Public Service Commission. There's a really robust process that happen there. There's environmental review, there's technical hearings and public testimony, lots of opportunities for comment. And so all that is happening within Wisconsin, you know, a lot of these projects are on private land. You know, it's just contracts with individual landowners. And so. There are some things that the federal government is trying to do to hamper renewable energy development certainly, but obviously these projects are still moving forward in Wisconsin.

[00:01:47] **Speaker 1** So how big of a win? We described it as a win, but how big a win are these PSC approvals for clean energy in Wisconsin?

[00:01:55] **Speaker 2** Well, it's really notable that Badger Hollow is the first wind project to be approved in over 14 years. That's really significant. We know that we need a lot more wind energy, solar energy to meet our energy needs and to do so in a clean way. Solar and wind are the cheapest forms of electricity. So it's a really great win for people's pocketbooks for our electricity bills. And these also really represent huge opportunities for rural communities in terms of the economics and the money that is flowing into the host communities from the farmers who sign leases to host these, where they get this long term, stable, high income, which is helping them kind of weather these ups and downs with tariff wars and everything like that and commodity crops right now. And it's a big win for communities too, who get annual payments for hosting these projects. And so. They can use that money to do things like fix roads or lower taxes or just whatever the local leaders and team is the highest and best use. So it's.

[00:02:59] **Speaker 1** So the 19 turbines at the Badger Hollow Project approved, how much energy does that produce?

[00:03:06] **Speaker 2** It's enough to power tens of thousands of Wisconsin homes. Wind energy is very efficient. You know, just one spin of a wind turbine can power or sorry, one minute of wind turbine spinning can power a Wisconsin home for an entire day. So we're generating huge amounts of energy from those turbines.

[00:03:26] **Speaker 1** How does wind work with solar? Is that a complementary kind of mix?

[00:03:32] **Speaker 2** So yeah, so solar obviously is getting energy from the sun. So we need sunlight. It does not work at night. The wind is blowing during the day and at night, so they work very well together. A lot of these projects, not these ones that were recently approved, but increasingly we're seeing projects be proposed along with storage like batteries. And so that can also help store when there's a lot of wind or, you know, really sunny days store that energy away for some of those times where we've got less of those resources. They work well seasonally together as well. So there's less sun in the winter, although the panels themselves are very efficient in cold temperatures, but wind is actually more productive in the winter too because the colder air is denser and it helps kind of generate more electricity. So they really do pair well together.

[00:04:20] **Speaker 1** So why has it taken so long to have a wind project approved?

[00:04:26] **Speaker 2** There have been wind projects approved just not at this scale. So other projects that are less than 100 megawatts get approved at the county level. And so we have seen some of those wind projects come through in recent years, but this is the first one that's over 100 megawatts, a much bigger project to be approved at The Public Service Commission.

[00:04:45] **Speaker 1** We just did an interview about the amount of energy new data centers are going to require. How will this portfolio of clean energy help boost that capacity?

[00:04:55] **Speaker 2** Any additional electricity that's coming online is going to be helpful, but these data centers are really representing a massive, massive energy demand. It's kind of hard to wrap our minds around them, frankly. Clean Wisconsin just did an analysis that showed that just for a couple of data centers that did report their energy use, they would use as much energy or more energy than all of the homes in Wisconsin combined. So it's really staggering. Haven't been seeing renewables powering these data centers yet. What we're seeing is more gas plants being proposed. That's what happened when WeEnergy's territory, a couple of gas plants were approved to support the Microsoft data center. We're seeing a renewed interest in nuclear. I will say there's a misalignment in the timeline of when we have this energy demand from the data centers and how long it takes to build those projects. Solar and wind are actually the fastest. They take maybe one or two years to build. Gas is more like five. In nuclear, you're looking at a decade or more. So it's a really tough proposition, but every bit counts.

[00:06:02] **Speaker 1** Meanwhile, the buildout of electric vehicle charging stations in Wisconsin seems to be back on track after funding was pulled and then a lawsuit restored it. When the project is complete, how covered will the state of Wisconsin be for people wanting to charge their EVs?

[00:06:21] **Speaker 2** Our state's Department of Transportation did an excellent job of planning and making sure that we have good coverage. They looked at all the corridors where there were gaps. And so when we fully implement all of this funding and get these charging stations built, Wisconsinites will be able to travel around the state with confidence, knowing that there was going to be a charging station on their way when they need to use it.

[00:06:42] **Speaker 1** We will watch those going up. Chelsea Chandler, Clean Wisconsin, thanks very much.