

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS
Denver, CO: November 13, 2002

Stricter energy standards could aid state, study says

Changes would save money, create jobs, Boulder group says

By Heather Draper, Rocky Mountain News
November 13, 2002

Colorado could save \$6.4 billion, create 12,200 new jobs and cut its water use by 14 billion gallons a year if the state would invoke stricter energy-efficiency standards, a public interest group said Tuesday.

The Southwest Energy Efficiency Project, a Boulder-based public interest initiative started last year, released its findings as part of a six-state study on energy efficiency.

The study predicted increased energy efficiency could cut Colorado's electricity use 17 percent by 2010 and 31 percent by 2020.

"This is not a pie-in-the-sky approach but one that is achievable with currently available technologies," said the project's founder, Howard Geller.

The study analyzed electricity use in a "business-as-usual" scenario and a high-efficiency scenario.

The high-efficiency scenario is based on the use of stricter appliance and air conditioning efficiency standards, better lighting systems, more efficient home and commercial building designs and improved motors and other devices used in industry.

Geller said cutting electricity demand would mean the state could avoid having to build 1,200 megawatts of power capacity by 2010 and 2,400 megawatts by 2020.

The avoided investment in new power plants, transmission lines and fuel purchases would save the state \$8.5 billion, offsetting the estimated \$2 billion it would cost to make the state more energy-efficient, he said.

Geller admitted that energy efficiency is a hard sell in a state such as Colorado, a large producer of natural gas and coal.

"I started the Southwest project because I saw it as a region lagging in energy-efficiency efforts compared with other parts of the country," he said.

Geller doesn't yet have Xcel Energy and the Public Utilities Commission on board for his proposals.

"Historically, the PUC has not expressed support for demand-side management programs," Geller said.

PUC spokesman Terry Bote said the commission has a mandate to find the least-cost energy sources for Colorado customers.

"Energy-efficiency programs can be bid into our resource mix like any other program," Bote said. "If it's found to be cost-effective, it will be approved."

Xcel spokesman Steve Roalstad said Xcel has an energy-efficiency program in Colorado in which it plans to spend \$75 million to cut electricity use by 124 megawatts by 2005.

draperh@RockyMountainNews.com or (303) 892-5456