

ACORE Blog

[A Q&A with Bob Cleaves, President & CEO, Biomass Power Association](#)

[Noah Ginsberg](#) 1/3/14

In December ACORE released its new report titled “[Renewable Energy In the 50 States: Northeast Region](#).” The report provides a detailed market and policy overview of states located in the Northeast region of the United States. During that time, I had the opportunity to talk about renewable energy in the Northeast with five ACORE members including [Bob Cleaves](#), President and CEO of Portland, Maine-based [Biomass Power Association](#).

Noah: Bob, I appreciate you taking some time out of your day to talk about renewable energy in Maine.

Bob: Thanks, Noah. I’m happy to be here.

Noah: Well I know Maine is blessed with abundant natural resources like lobster, but what about renewable energy?

Bob: You know Noah – there are a lot of headlines about renewable energy in Maine that cast a bad light on the state’s sector. But Maine is actually New England’s largest producer of renewable energy. In fact non-hydro renewables are responsible for 32% of in-state power generation.

Noah: Wow. And it appears from recent headlines that Maine is an exporter of renewable energy.

Bob: Surely. Because of Maine’s small population base relative to the rest of New England, it has for many years generated far more energy (particularly renewable energy) than it needs. So in Maine we think of renewable energy as a “product” that we sell to the rest of the region.

Noah: I’m sure Maine residents love the economic benefits from exporting clean energy.

Bob: Indeed – renewable energy and biomass in particular are huge growth engines for jobs. Renewable energy is part of our state’s history. For more than a century, we have used our renewable resources to power our mills, factories, and homes. This form of energy has served the state well, acting as a reliable (and sustainable) buffer against uncontrollable fluctuations in the price of fossil-based energy while enhancing our local economy and the environment. And as our core manufacturing jobs have been outsourced, renewable energy has played a key role in restoring the economies of rural areas throughout the state. Clean energy also fits nicely with our state’s image as a sustainable place to live. Many folks forget that Maine was one of the first states in the Nation with a renewable portfolio standard.

Noah: What does Maine's current renewable portfolio look like?

Bob: Wind power is responsible for 431MW of energy capacity and that amount is likely to double over the next 5 years. The solar PV market is a small 2.8MW of capacity. But Maine harnesses quite a bit of its energy from hydropower, 733MW to be exact. My personal favorite energy source of course is biomass and it is quite plentiful in Maine. Biomass and waste to energy account for 609MW of the state's energy capacity.

Noah: What are your thoughts on the future of Maine's renewable energy industry?

Bob: I think it's bright. People realize that renewable energy is a win-win for our environment and the economy. What matters most is that policy uncertainty at the federal and state levels is mitigated so future projects can come online. There's a lot of work to be done but there are many reasons to be optimistic.

Noah: Thanks for your insight and analysis, Bob.

Bob: Thanks, Noah.