

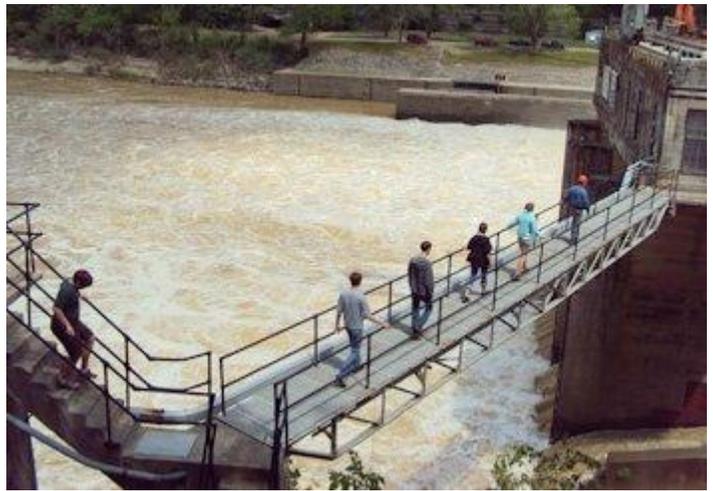


## Ten percent more love to Mother ... Ann Lee, that is

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Thursday, November 18, 2010

As some students know, 15 miles from campus at Lock Seven on the Kentucky River, a mother turns her great wheels to produce nearly ten percent of Centre's energy. The Mother Ann Lee Hydroelectric Dam offsets some of our energy that would otherwise be produced by coal, which provides 90 percent of energy burned in Kentucky. In December, Centre will start buying directly from Mother Ann Lee at a lower cost and higher capacity. Increasing from ten percent at the start of our purchasing, there is a potential for a greater percent of our energy to be produced by Mother Ann Lee.



by Caroline Stephens

Last spring, students walked across a gang plank out to Mother Ann Lee for a tour of the hydroelectric power plant, which harnesses the water energy from the Kentucky River.

This increase in energy purchased from Mother Ann Lee is a result of energy company E.On's recent change in policy. When Centre started purchasing renewable energy credits from E.On, their policy was to support regional and in-state renewable energy sources. This past year, however, their policy has shifted. E.On now purchases Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) for consumers from those sources that are most economically attractive.

This shift is sensible from an economic perspective: E.On could not sell RECs for one price when there were others available for a cheaper one. And this may certainly increase the number of RECs sold, thus offsetting more coal-produced electricity with renewable sources.

"People were signing up for this because they wanted to support renewable energy in Kentucky," said Mother Ann Lee engineer David Kinloch-Brown. Such a policy change has repercussions for certain consumers, such as Centre, who support local energy producers.

In addition to this shift in REC policy, E.On also eliminated the use of Three Degrees, a validation company that ensures that RECs are sold fairly, not two or three times around. Companies like Three Degrees serve a crucial role in budding markets, regulating the system

before the government is able to. Yet, as the market for RECs has matured, there has been less of a need for external regulation.

Preston Miles, professor of chemistry, serves as chairman for the President's Climate Commitment committee, whose goal is to carry out President Roush's commitment to campus carbon neutrality by 2040. When Miles learned of these changes in September, he set up a meeting with the company to discuss how Centre might continue to work with E.On to purchase RECs from Mother Ann Lee.

"We wanted to maintain a relationship with Mother Ann Lee," said junior Louesa Akin, the student senate pro-temporante at the meeting. "It was close enough that students could go visit the plant, it was supporting a Kentucky business and there is something romantic about the whole idea."

In order to continue buying RECs from Mother Ann Lee, Miles met with Kinloch-Brown and Lock Seven Hydro Partners, the company that owns the hydroelectric dam, to purchase directly from the source. With the elimination of E.On and Three Degrees, Centre was able to purchase more RECs from Mother Ann Lee.

"We were buying at \$13 per thousand kilowatt hour — that's what people call a REC," Miles said. "David Brown-Kinloch wasn't getting \$13. His board of directors felt they could sell to us at half that, \$6.50 per thousand kilowatt hour." With a better price per REC and the elimination of both middlemen, "we will purchase twice as many RECs," Miles said.

Purchasing RECs means that more renewable energy will be going into the grid, offsetting the amount that Centre takes out of it. "We never can say we're purchasing that electricity. Those electrons may not be getting here, but those electrons are reducing the amount of electrons that have to be produced by coal," Miles said, "the traditional coal-fired utilities generate less — and that I can take to the bank." Buying a REC essentially subsidizes the production of renewable energy.

With some figuring, Miles estimated that anywhere between 20 and 30 percent of Centre's energy will come from Mother Ann Lee. Centre and Lock Seven Hydro Partners will draw up a contract in November that will take effect in December of this year.

"If we reduce our consumption, a greater percentage of our energy will be produced from this local, renewable source," Miles said. As renewable sources emit less carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than coal, they are a critical step towards the college's goal of carbon neutrality by 2040.

Such a change would also impact Lock Seven Hydro Partners. Kinloch-Brown estimates that Centre would be purchasing 42 percent of energy produced at Mother Ann Lee. "Centre has been such a critical part of what we've been doing all along. It's a tremendous opportunity," Kinloch-Brown said.

By supporting Mother Ann Lee, Centre is helping build the state's infrastructure for regional renewable energy production. Still, what Kinloch-Brown and others working for renewable energy are waiting for is the word from Washington.

“Kentucky, being a coal state, is not going to jump into renewables on their own — it's going to be driven by what the federal government mandates,” Kinloch-Brown said. When that mandate comes, whether in the form of a carbon tax or cap and trade, the price of coal energy may become more expensive than energy from renewable sources. “Prices will jump and a lot of jobs that come for cheap energy are out of here,” Kinloch-Brown said.

An increase in our dependency on a regional, renewable resource can mean so much as energy security for the future and for the present, more reason to love your mother.

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From: <http://www.thecento.com/news/2010/nov/18/ten-percent-more-love-mother-ann-lee/>