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## Sciencenter now running exclusively on wind power

By David Hill  
Journal Staff

ITHACA — It's costing more, but the Sciencenter wants to set an example and cut its greenhouse gas emissions, so it's getting all of its electricity from wind power.

The hands-on science museum, at 601 First St., is planning to buy 250,000 kilowatt-hours of wind-generated electricity this year. The decision to replace conventionally generated electricity will eliminate an estimated 163 tons of carbon dioxide — a gas that scientists say contributes to man-made warming of the atmosphere and the world's climate. That amount, according to the Sciencenter, is equivalent to planting 22,113 trees or driving 281,940 fewer miles a year.

### How big are your carbon shoes?


From noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday, March 4, visitors will be able to calculate their own carbon footprint — how much Earth-warming emissions they produce — by bringing a recent household utility bill. Admission to the Sciencenter is free Sunday.

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New York State Electric & Gas told the Sciencenter that it is the first facility in Tompkins County to get all its electricity from NYSEG's wind energy program, museum Executive Director Charlie Trautmann said.

Because wind power still costs more to generate than that generated by coal, natural gas or other standard means, the decision will cost about

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\$5,000 more a year, or 20 percent more than conventional electricity. But the Sciencenter board has committed 1 percent of the Sciencenter's annual budget to a 10-year overall environmental sustainability initiative, Trautmann said Tuesday.

The changeover happened last week, but the Sciencenter announced it this week to coincide with the launch Thursday of International Polar Year. The Polar Year is a world-wide effort to bring scientific research regarding the polar regions and climate change to the public. Scientists who study climate change say the poles are where some of the first and most profound effects of a warming climate may appear.

The Sciencenter has been involved in a project to develop and distribute educational materials to promote awareness of climate change and global warming as part of the project. The initiative was organized by the Association of Science-Technology Centers, which represents science museums worldwide. Trautmann is the secretary of the International Action on Global Warming's (IGLO's) international education committee. More information is online at [www.astc.org/iglo](http://www.astc.org/iglo).

The Sciencenter had already been buying some windmill-generated power, but it decided to go to 100 percent to show leadership on the issue, Trautmann said. The added cost is seen as an investment; he said extra money can help pay for more windmills and developing wind-generation technology.

"Anybody that buys wind energy is investing in the capacity to generate more electricity from wind," Trautmann said.

As part of the sustainability initiative, Sciencenter staff members have pledged to find other ways to conserve, including turning off computers and lights when not in use. The Sciencenter is also hooking up a system to use ground water from a 100-foot well to pre-cool air in the summer so that the air conditioner has to work less, Trautmann said.

The wind-generated power is available through a partnership between NYSEG and Community Energy Inc., which markets wind energy.

NYSEG commended the Sciencenter for its decision.

"As more and more customers tap into this option, more wind farms will come online in New York and the state's fuel mix for generating electricity will become more diverse and environmentally friendly," NYSEG President and Chief Executive Officer Jim Laurito said in a statement on the arrangement.

The wind is generated at the Fenner wind farm in Madison County, the Weathersfield wind farm in Lewis County, and the Waymart wind farm in

northeastern Pennsylvania, according to NYSEG.

Critics see drawbacks in wind power, including effects on scenery, harm to birds from their tall windmills and their blades, and noise. But its environmental attractiveness is making it a more popular power option.

According to NYSEG, as of the end of last year 9,300 of the company's customers had signed up to purchase wind-generated electricity through a program the company began offering in August 2002 in partnership with Community Energy. The number of customers participating in the NYSEG program increased more than 200 percent from 2005 to 2006. These NYSEG customers are expected to use 33.3 million kilowatt-hours of wind energy in 2007, according to NYSEG.

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**STORYCHAT** 

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