# *Renewables Take Off, in WA and Across the Globe*

**Local News**

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SEATTLE - The green power engine is gaining steam, according to a new study backed by the United Nations. It says renewable energy resources accounted for more than half of all new power-generating capacity built in 2009, both in the United States and Europe, and predicts renewables will continue to outpace conventional power sources.

The trend is playing out in the Northwest, too. About 4,100 megawatts (MW) of power are now generated here from wind, solar and geothermal sources. That's only 5 percent of the total, but Rachel Scrimshak, executive director of the Renewable Northwest Project, says it's up from 60 MW ten years ago, and is enough to power one million homes.

"It's a terrific amount of growth. It shows that people have capability and experience and are willing to invest in relatively new technologies, and incorporate them in our system."

One challenge in the western U.S. is that the power transmission grid has just about reached its capacity to accommodate new generation, says Scrimshak. Fixing that requires some longer-term planning, which she notes should be done now, so that the system can grow along with the renewable industries.

She says utility companies are working to meet the goals set by Washington and Oregon to generate more of their power from renewable sources, and a combination of federal money and state tax breaks is making more projects possible. All of this is having an economic impact, she adds.

"There are a lot of jobs associated with renewables in the Northwest - not just the direct jobs for building these projects and operating them, but we are attracting businesses who want to locate their North American headquarters in the Northwest because they see it as such a hub for new activity."

As an example, she says, the Northwest now is home to 13 solar parts manufacturers. We've also got some competition, however. The report says China is manufacturing 40 percent of the solar panels and 30 percent of the wind turbines in the world.

The report, from the Renewable Energy Policy Network, says renewables make up 18 percent of the world's electricity supply. It is available online at www.ren21.net.