

THIRD EDITION 2013

# PRO-FILES

MAGAZINE

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Gary  
**Thompson**  
The Clean Energy Judge





## Gary D. Thompson

*Judge*

Sherman County Court  
Moro, OR

There is good reason that the small, rural community of Sherman County, Ore., has been abuzz with talk of wind farms. In the years since wind turbines were introduced to the area otherwise dominated by wheat farms, these clean energy sources have brought in \$17.5 million in taxes, fees and assessments alone. Furthermore, a compensation plan was put into effect to ensure that every citizen of the county receives some portion of this added revenue: \$590 per year to be exact.

Judge Gary Thompson spoke with The New York Times for its May 2011 article "Money Blows in to a Patch of Oregon Known for Its Unrelenting Winds," commenting that these innovations are like "... a breath of fresh air" to revitalize an area whose sources of husbandry have all but disappeared. In addition to this high-profile feature, he has been popping up in local and online press quite often. Recognizing the innumerable benefits that green energy sources have had on the agricultural community, he has aligned himself with numerous public action committees. He is the chairman of the Association of Oregon Counties' energy and environment group, and a member of several renewable energy associations.

Though Judge Thompson has been most vocal about his support for wind energy, he also believes that the country's utility services need a much larger overhaul. Apart from the money already set aside for school improvement projects and local businesses, he intends to encourage his fellow public officials to allocate revenue from Sherman County's wind farms for additional eco-friendly projects, viewing the development of renewable energy sources as not just a source of fiscal rejuvenation, but as an essential element of our nation's security.

### *How do you hope to contribute to your industry, or what do you hope to change?*

I'm hoping that eventually the electricity running throughout the U.S. will be primarily local, instead of [on] the grid. There need to be more community projects and personally or community-owned small, renewable sources on rooftops and in backyards. They call that "distributed generation." The federal government should put their efforts into setting up a distributed generation system, as opposed to the large, high-priced grid system that they're using right now.