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## Integrating High Levels of Variable Renewable Energy into Electric Power Systems

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Revised December 2018

NREL/PR-5D00-68349

# Errata

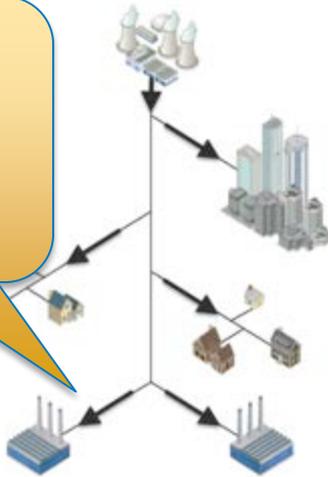
In December 2018, the following change was made to Slide 11: Alaska Village, 80%, has been corrected to state St. Paul Alaska, 55%. Additional data points have also been added.

- Understanding current and future power systems
- Current state of variable renewable energy (VRE): solar and wind
- Current power systems operating with VRE
- Challenges and solutions of operating power systems with very high levels of VRE
- Research needs

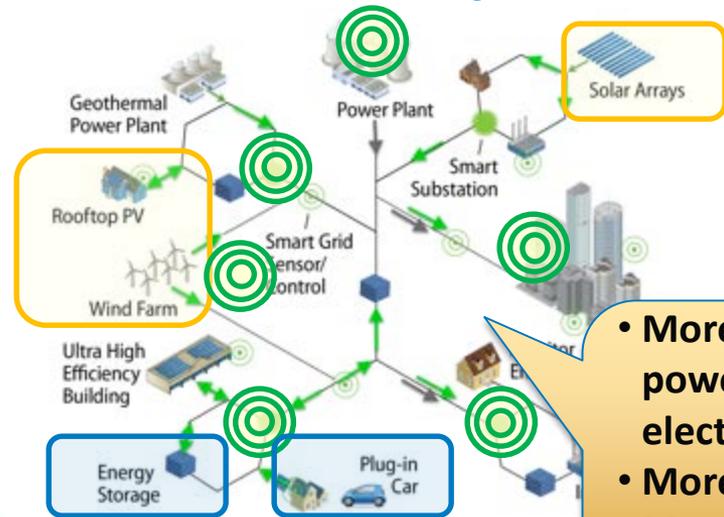
# Evolution of the Power System

## Current Power System

- Large synchronous generation
- Central control.



## Future Power Systems



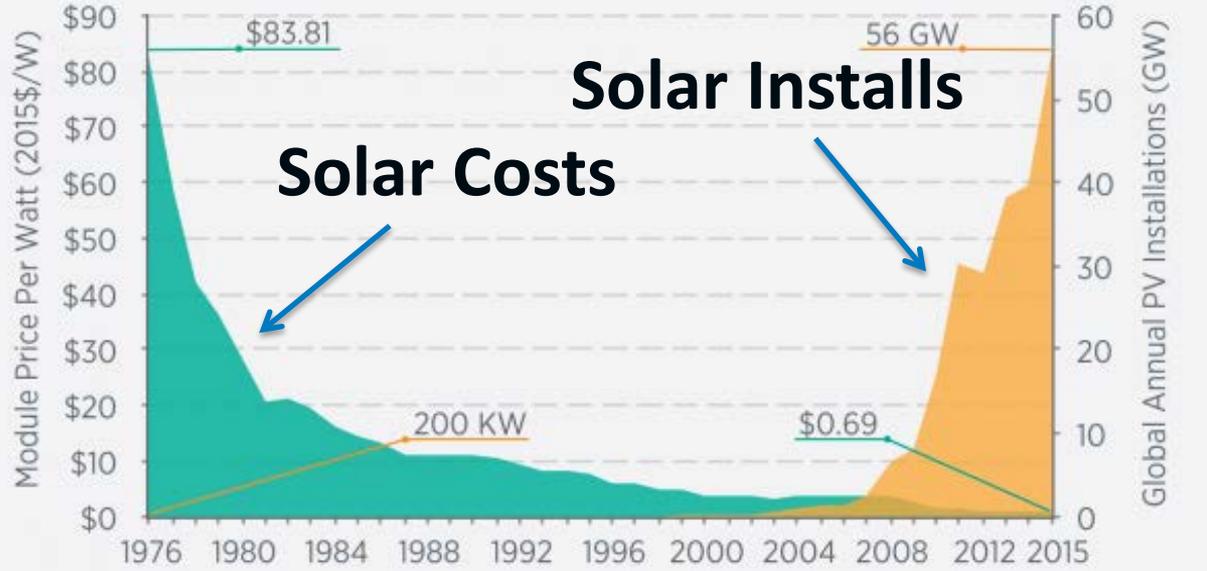
- More VRE—power electronics
- More data
- More distributed resources

## New challenges in a modern grid:

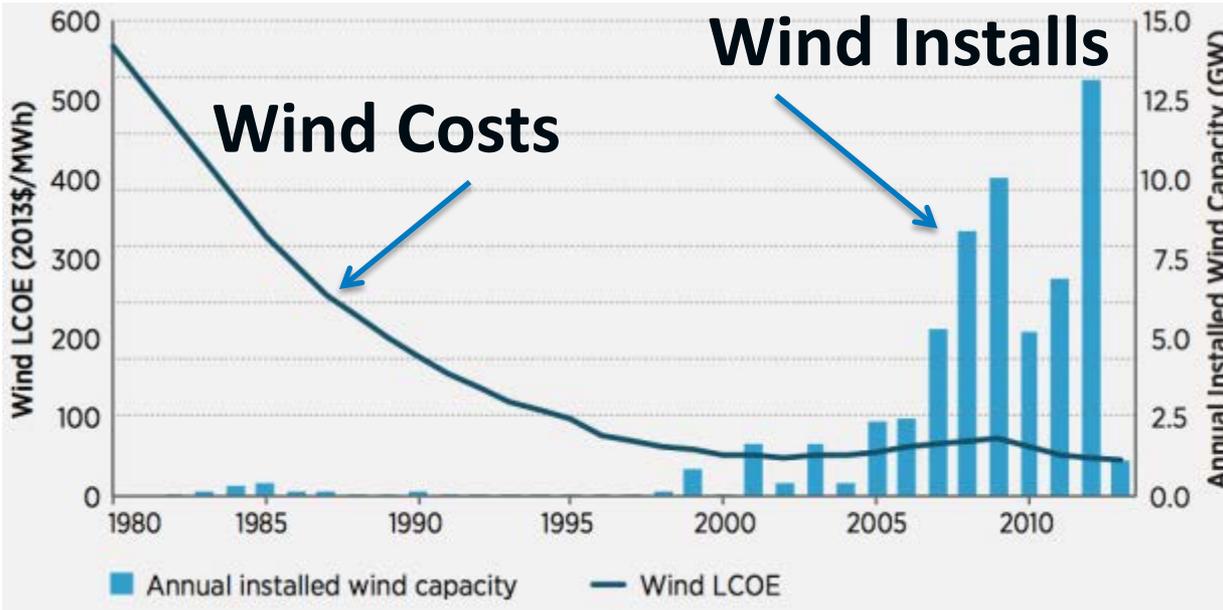
- Increasing levels of power electronics-based VRE: solar and wind
- More use of communications, controls, data, and information (e.g., smart grids)
- Other new technologies: electric vehicles (EVs), distributed storage, flexible loads
- **Becoming highly distributed—more complex to control**

# Current State of Variable Renewable Energy: Solar and Wind

# Significant Declines in Renewables Cost— Increase in Renewables Installations



Source: U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), *On the Path to SunShot*, <http://energy.gov/eere/sunshot/path-sunshot>



Source: DOE, *Wind Vision Report*, <http://energy.gov/eere/wind/downloads/wind-vision-new-era-wind-power-united-states>

# Photovoltaic Systems in the United States

## Solar Star



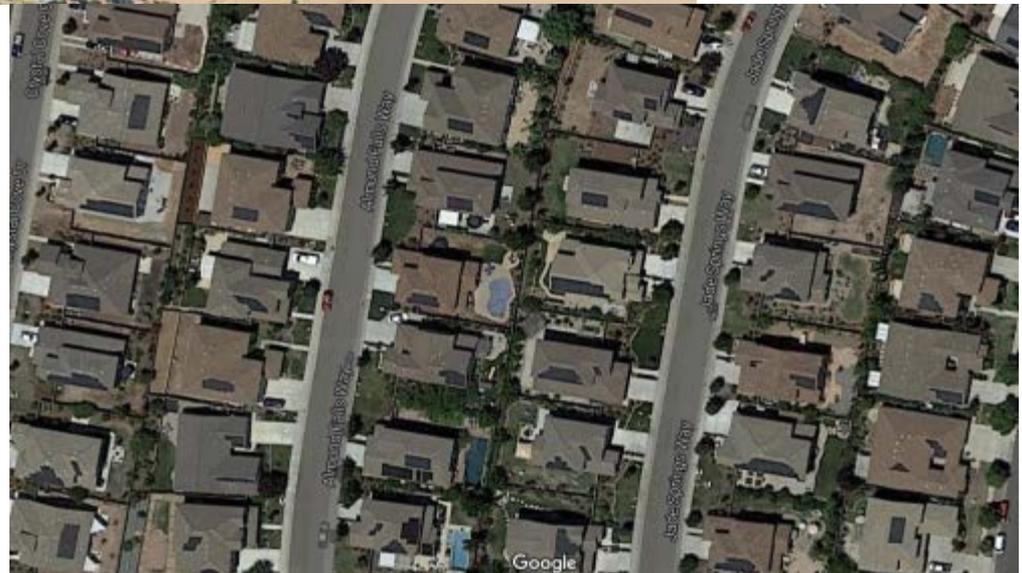
### QUICK FACTS

Location:	Rosamond, California
Capacity:	579 MW
Owner:	MidAmerican Solar, a subsidiary of MidAmerican Renewables
Design/Construction:	SunPower
Power Purchaser:	Southern California Edison
Technology:	SunPower™ Oasis™ Power Plant
No. of Modules:	Approx. 1,720,000
Equivalent No. of Homes Powered:	Approx. 255,000
Acres:	Approx. 3,200

Source: Sunpower,

<https://us.sunpower.com/sites/sunpower/files/media-library/fact-sheets/fs-solar-star-projects-factsheet.pdf>

## Solar Subdivisions



Anatolia Subdivision, Rancho Cordova, CA. Source: © 2015 Google, Map Data

# Wind Systems in the United States



**Alta Wind Energy Center,  
Tehachapi Pass, CA<sup>1</sup>**  
600 Vestas Wind Turbines  
1,547 MW  
2,680.6 GWh/yr

**Capricorn Ridge Wind Farm,  
Sterling and Coke County, TX<sup>2</sup>**  
407 GE and Siemens Turbines  
663 MW



**Shepard's Flats,  
Arlington, OR<sup>3</sup>**  
338 GE Turbines  
845 MW  
2,000 GWh/yr

Sources:

1

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alta\\_Wind\\_Energy\\_Center](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alta_Wind_Energy_Center)

2

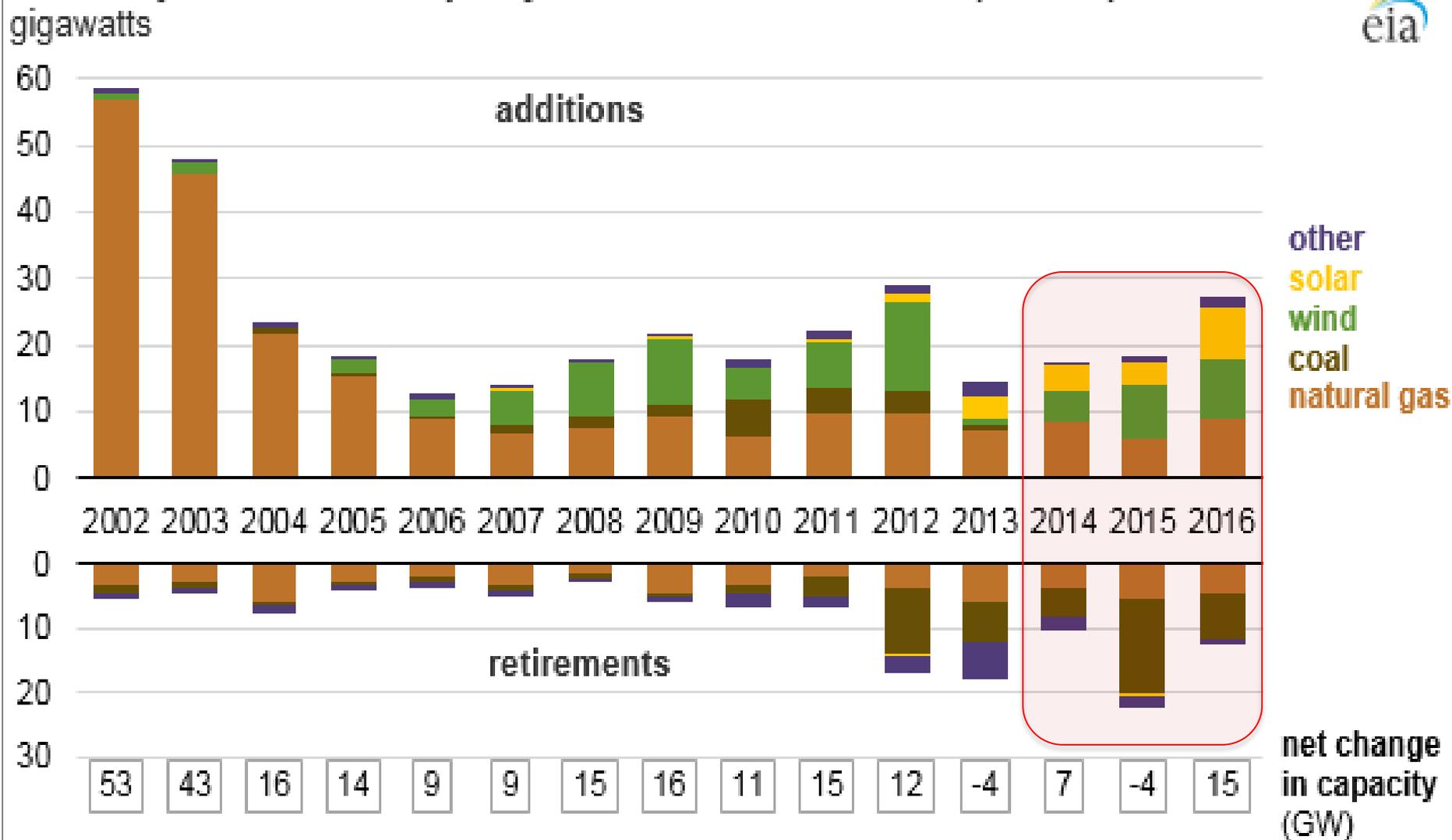
[http://www.nexteraenergyresources.com/pdf\\_redesign/capricornridge.pdf](http://www.nexteraenergyresources.com/pdf_redesign/capricornridge.pdf)

3

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shepherds\\_Flat\\_Wind\\_Farm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shepherds_Flat_Wind_Farm)

# New Generation Additions in the United States Are Mostly Gas, Wind, and Solar

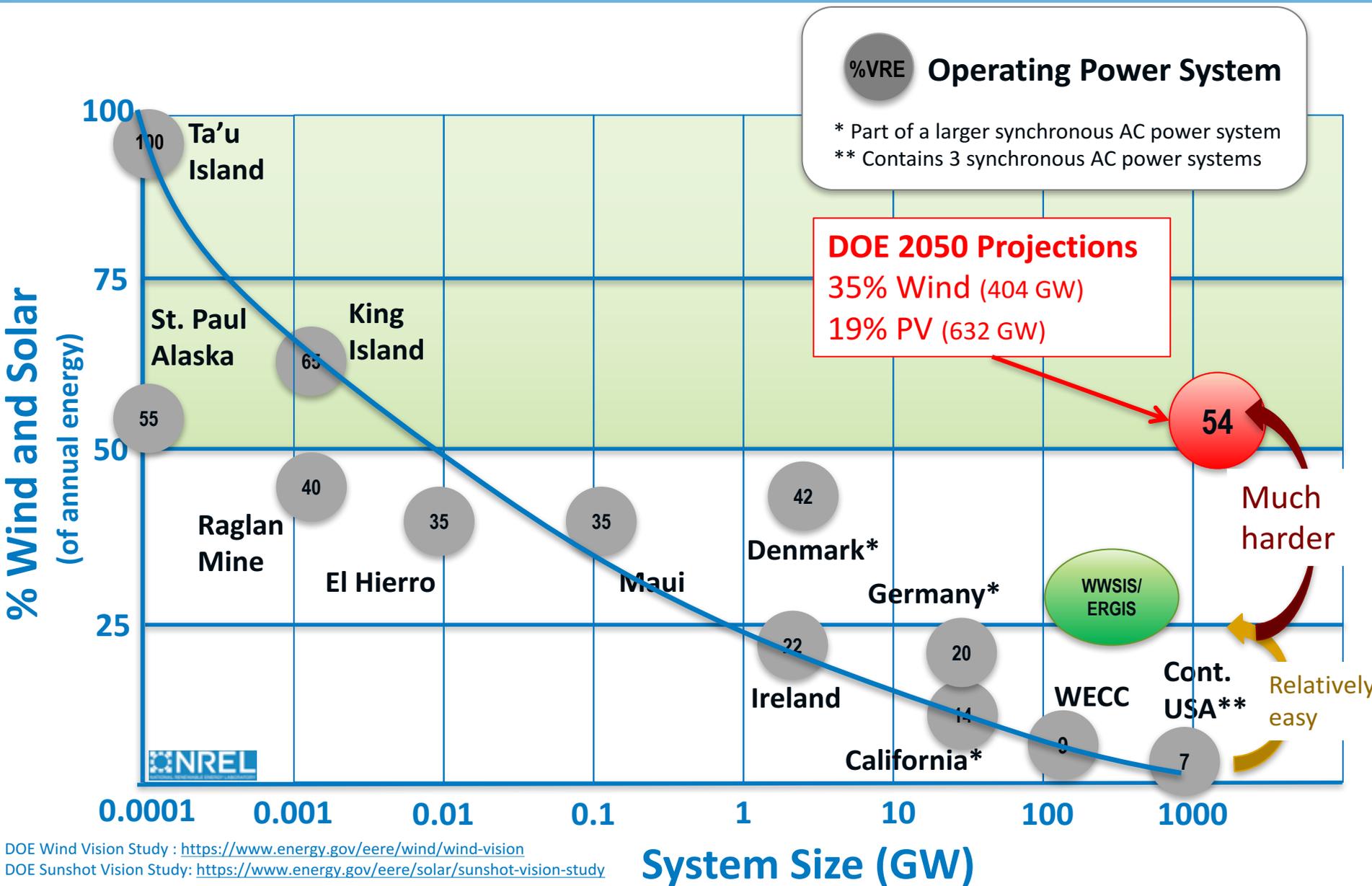
U.S. utility-scale electric capacity additions and retirements (2002-16)



Source: EIA, <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=30112>

# Current Power Systems Operating with Variable Renewable Energy

# Moving toward Ultra-High Levels of Variable Renewable Energy



# Western Wind and Solar Integration Study

- **Goal:**

- To understand the costs and operating impacts due to the **variability** and **uncertainty** of wind, PV and concentrating solar power on the WestConnect grid.

- **Utilities:**

- Arizona Public Service
- El Paso Electric
- NV Energy
- Public Service Company of New Mexico
- Salt River Project
- Tri-State Generation & Transmission
- Tucson Electric Power
- Xcel Energy
- Western Area Power Administration.

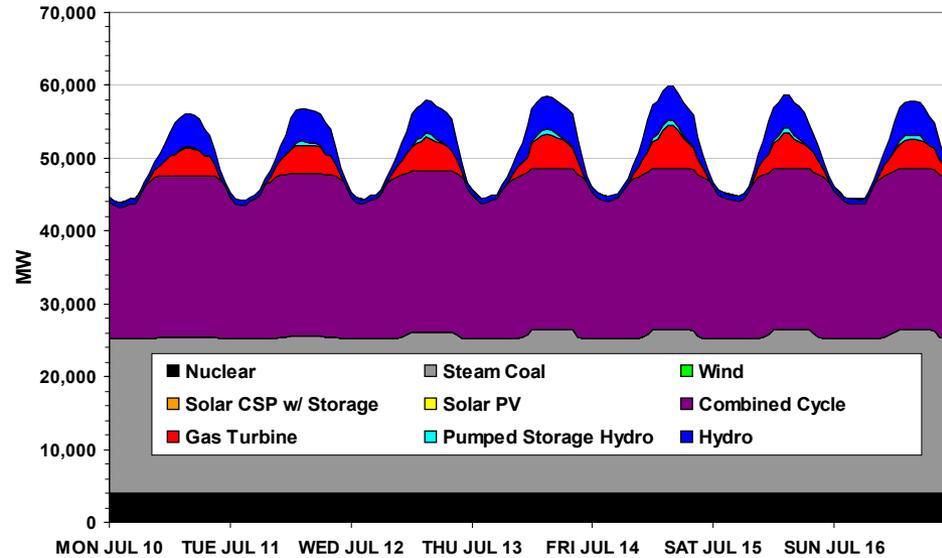


*Can we integrate 35% renewables in the West?*

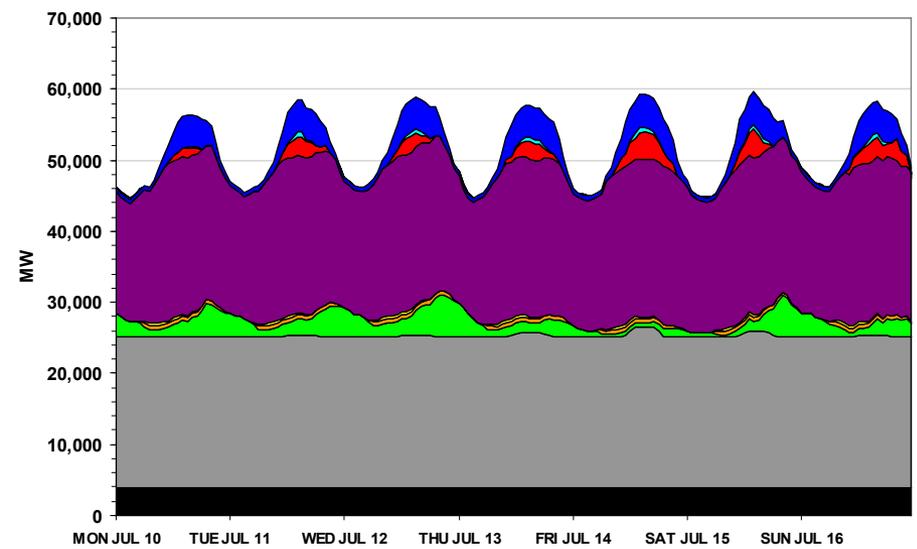
Source: NREL, Western Wind and Solar Integration Study (WWSIS) (2007–2015), <http://www.nrel.gov/grid/wwsis.html>

# Dispatch During a Tame Week (July)

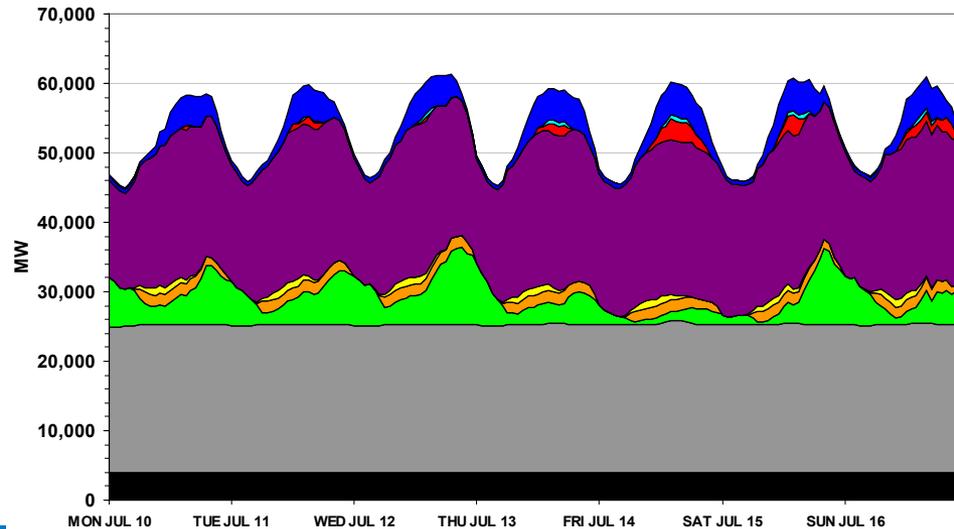
## No wind



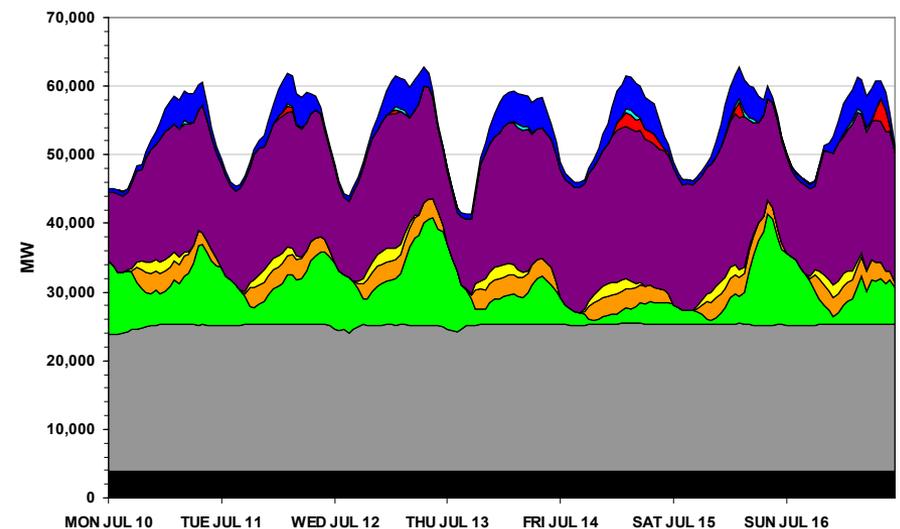
## 10% wind



## 20% wind

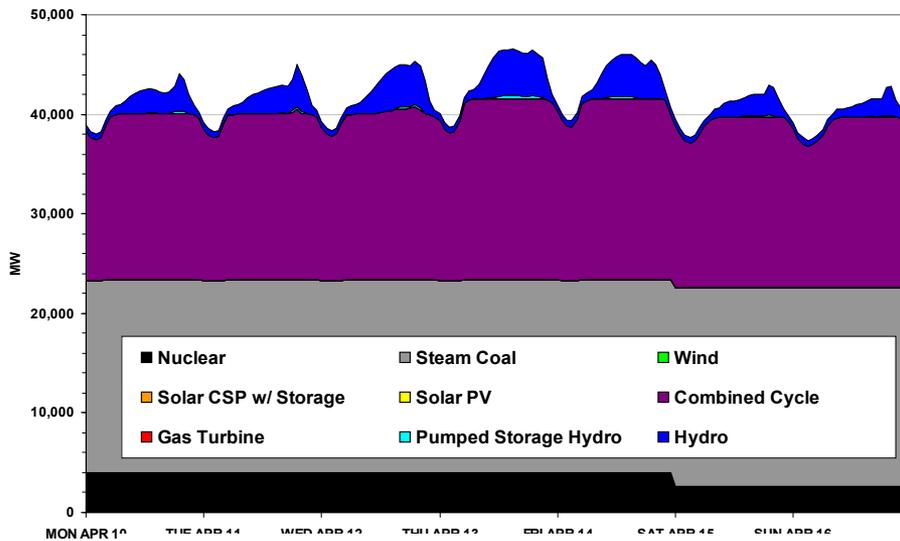


## 30% wind

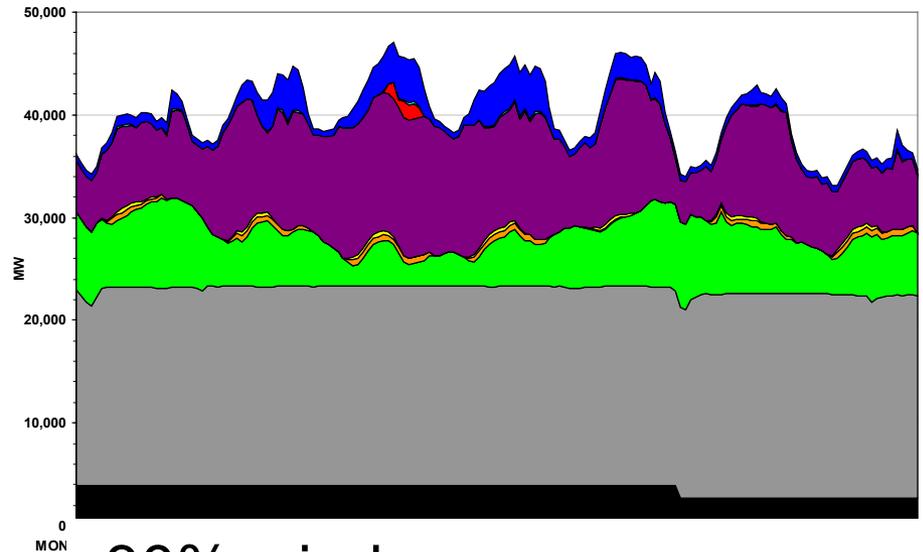


# Dispatch During the Worst Week (April)

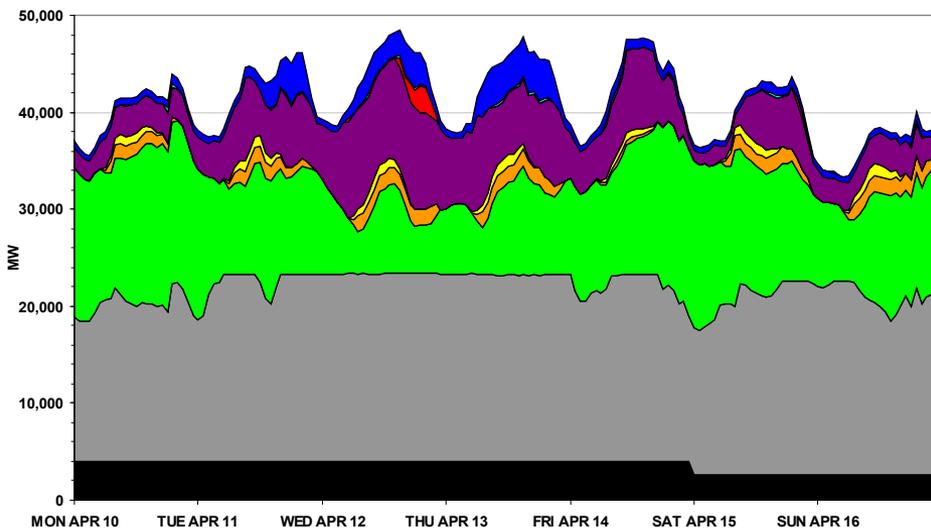
## No wind



## 10% wind

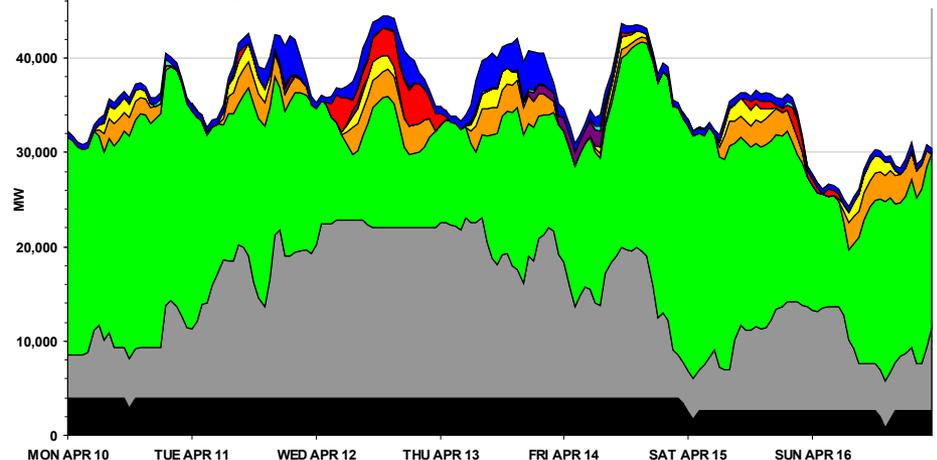


## 20% wind



## 30% wind

(Coal is cycling, and nuclear is being impacted; it is likely that wind will need to be curtailed. But the grid can be operated in a reliable manner.)



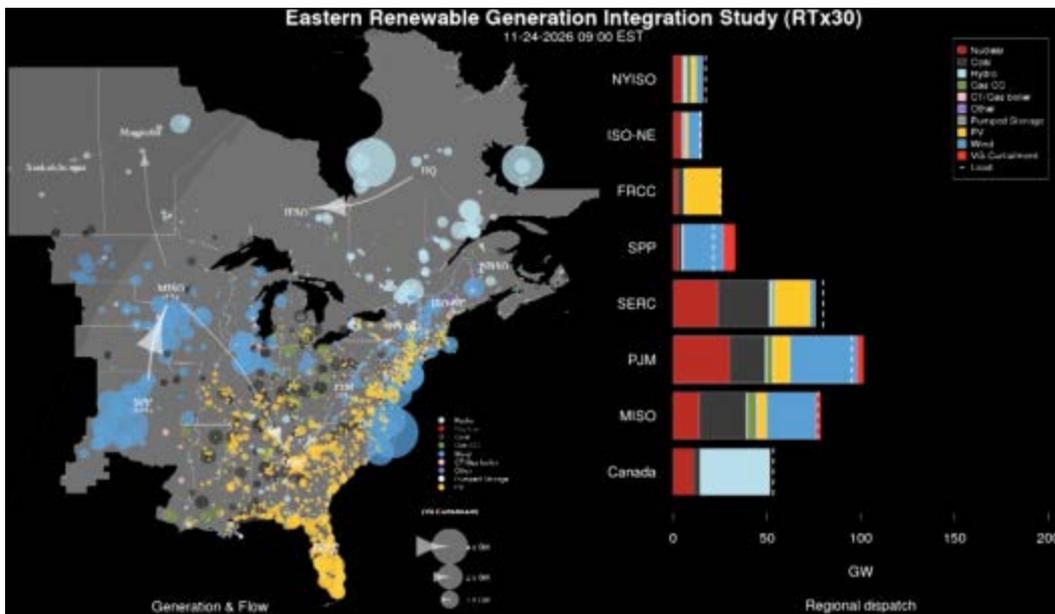
# Eastern Renewable Generation Integration Study

## Goals:

- Operational impact of 30% wind and solar penetration on the Eastern Interconnection at a 5-minute resolution
- Efficacy of mitigation options in managing variability and uncertainty in the system.

## Operational areas of interest:

- Reserves
  - Types
  - Quantities
  - Sharing.
- Commitment and dispatch:
  - Day-ahead
  - Four-hour-ahead
  - Real-time.
- Inter-regional transactions:
  - 1-hour
  - 15-minute
  - 5-minute.



## Impact

Demonstrated that very large power systems can operate at a 5-min dispatch with 30% VRE.

Source: NREL, Eastern Renewable Energy Integration Study (ERGIS) (2016), <http://www.nrel.gov/grid/ergis.html>

We have done the research and demonstrated that achieving 30% VRE is possible with minimal system changes.

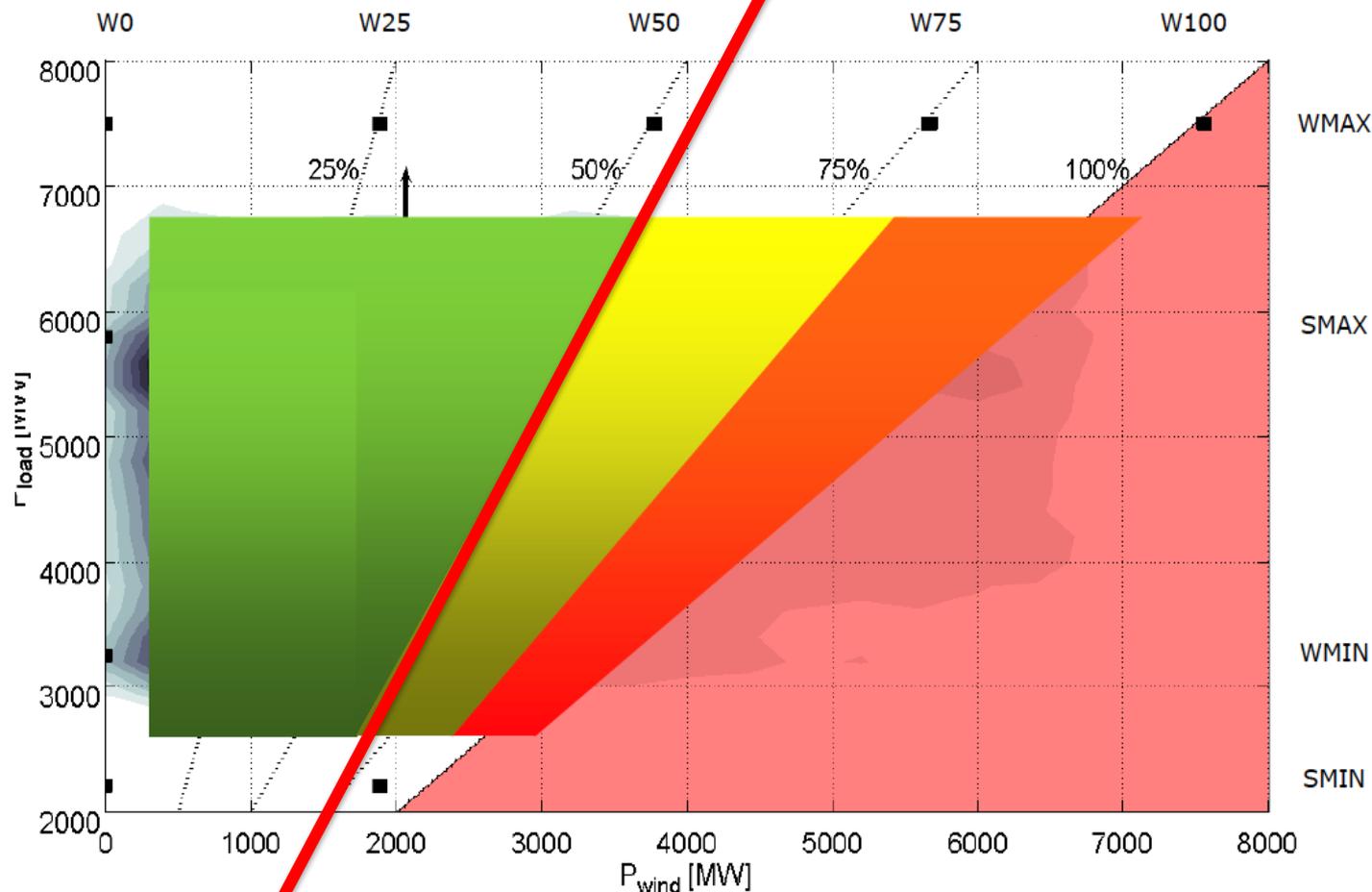
What do we need to do to achieve very high levels (more than 50%) of wind and solar integration?

# Examples of High Levels of VRE: Case Study—Ireland

## Ireland:

- **23% wind on annual energy basis (2015)**
- Island power system (6.5-GW peak).

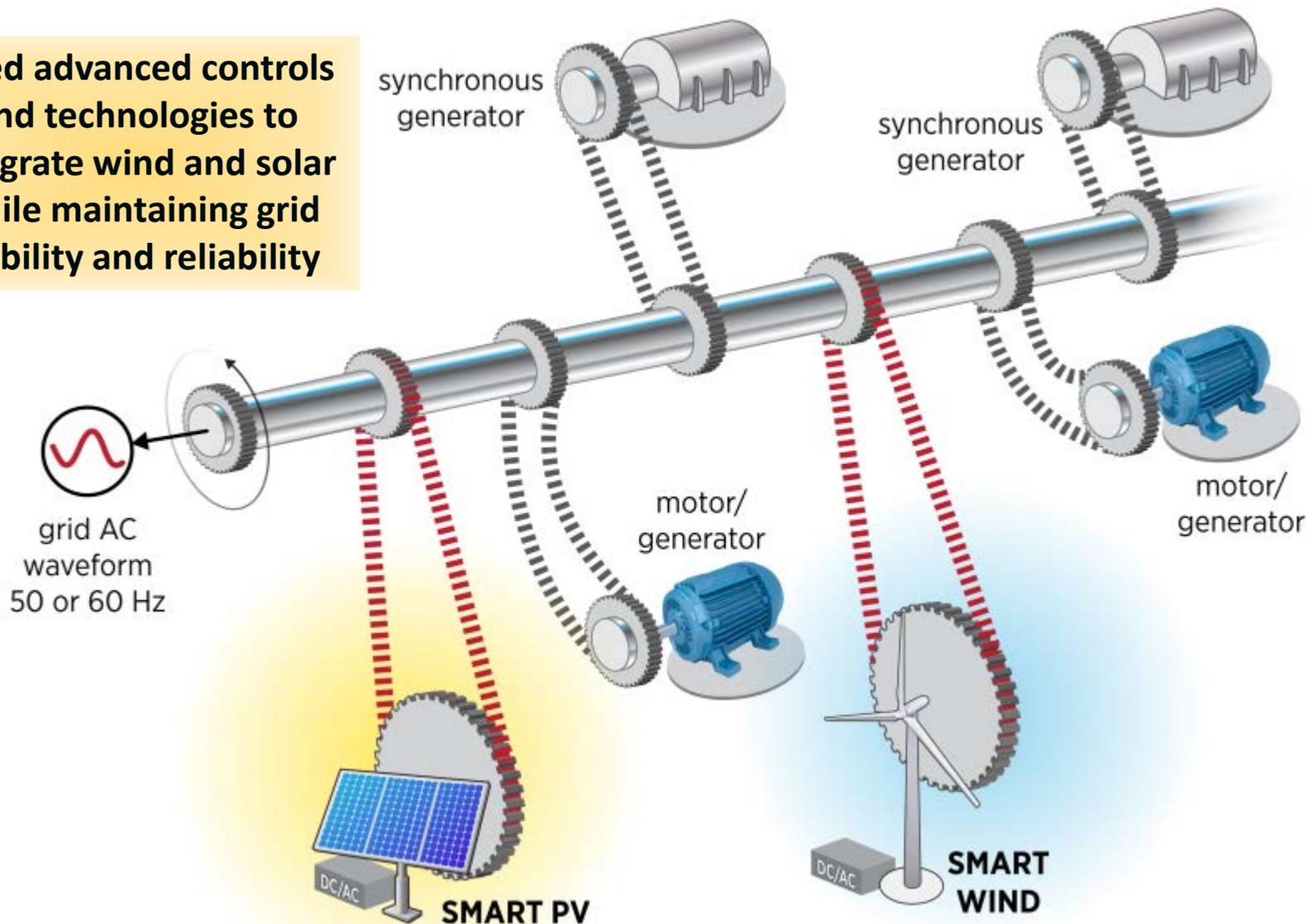
Currently limiting grid to  
**55% instantaneous nonsynchronous penetration**



Source: EirGrid, *All Island TSO Facilitation of Renewable Studies: Final Report (2010)*

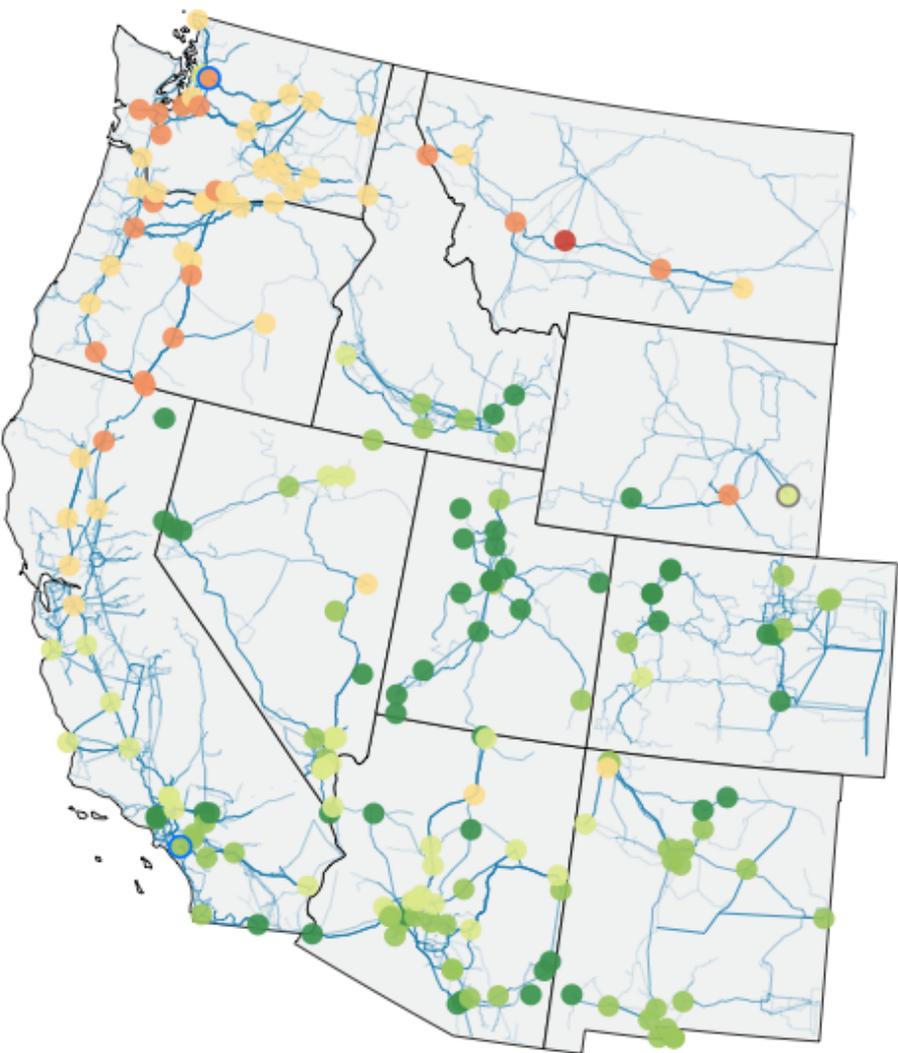
# High Renewable Penetrations Require Paradigm Change in Power System Operation

**Need advanced controls and technologies to integrate wind and solar while maintaining grid stability and reliability**

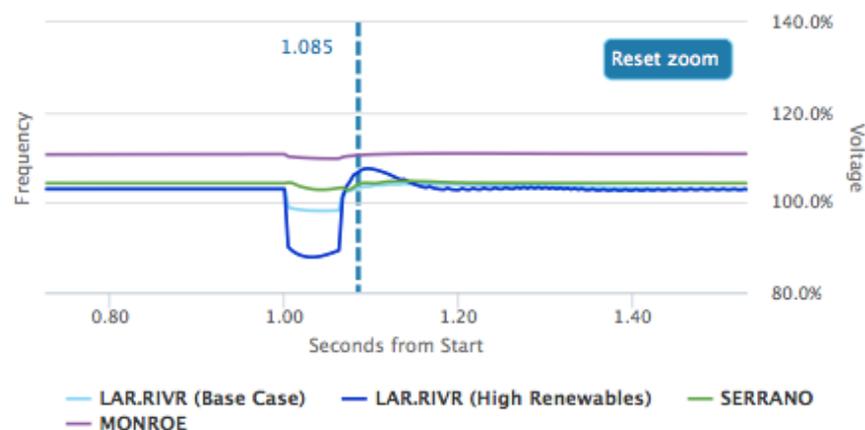


# Western Wind and Solar Integration Study: Phase 3— Frequency Response

## Western Wind and Solar Integration Study



- **Wind power plants:** voltage regulation and ride-through
- **Utility-scale PV:** voltage regulation and ride-through
- **Rooftop PV:** embedded in composite load model, no controls.



### Impact:

Western Interconnection can survive a major contingency outage with 30% variable generation (inverter-based).

Source: N.W. Miller et al., *WWSIS: Phase 3A*, <http://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy16osti/64822.pdf>

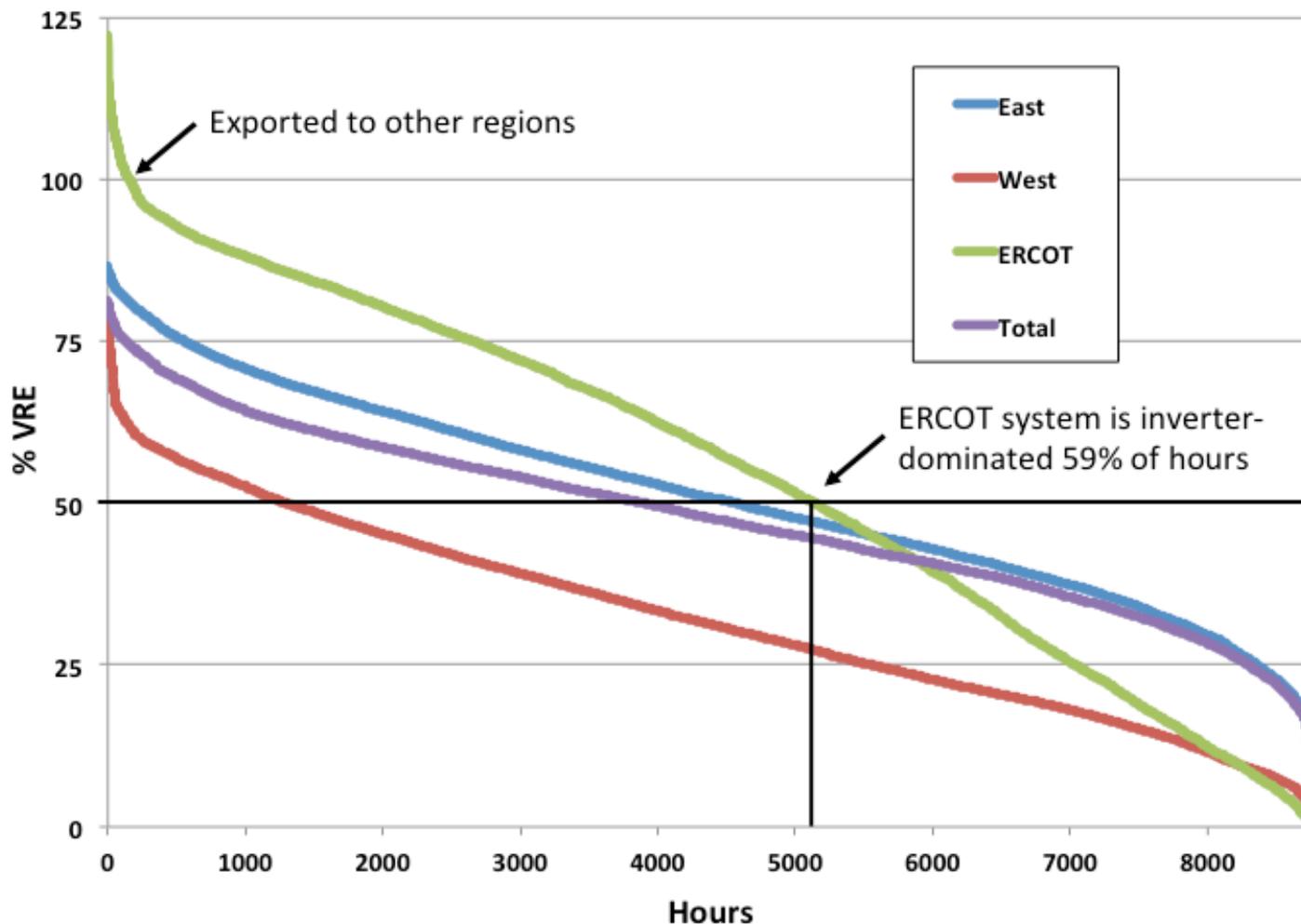
# Let's Look at Really High Levels of VRE

## Renewable Electricity Futures (REF) Study

REF examined renewable penetrations from 30%–90% across entire United States.

All renewables were considered.

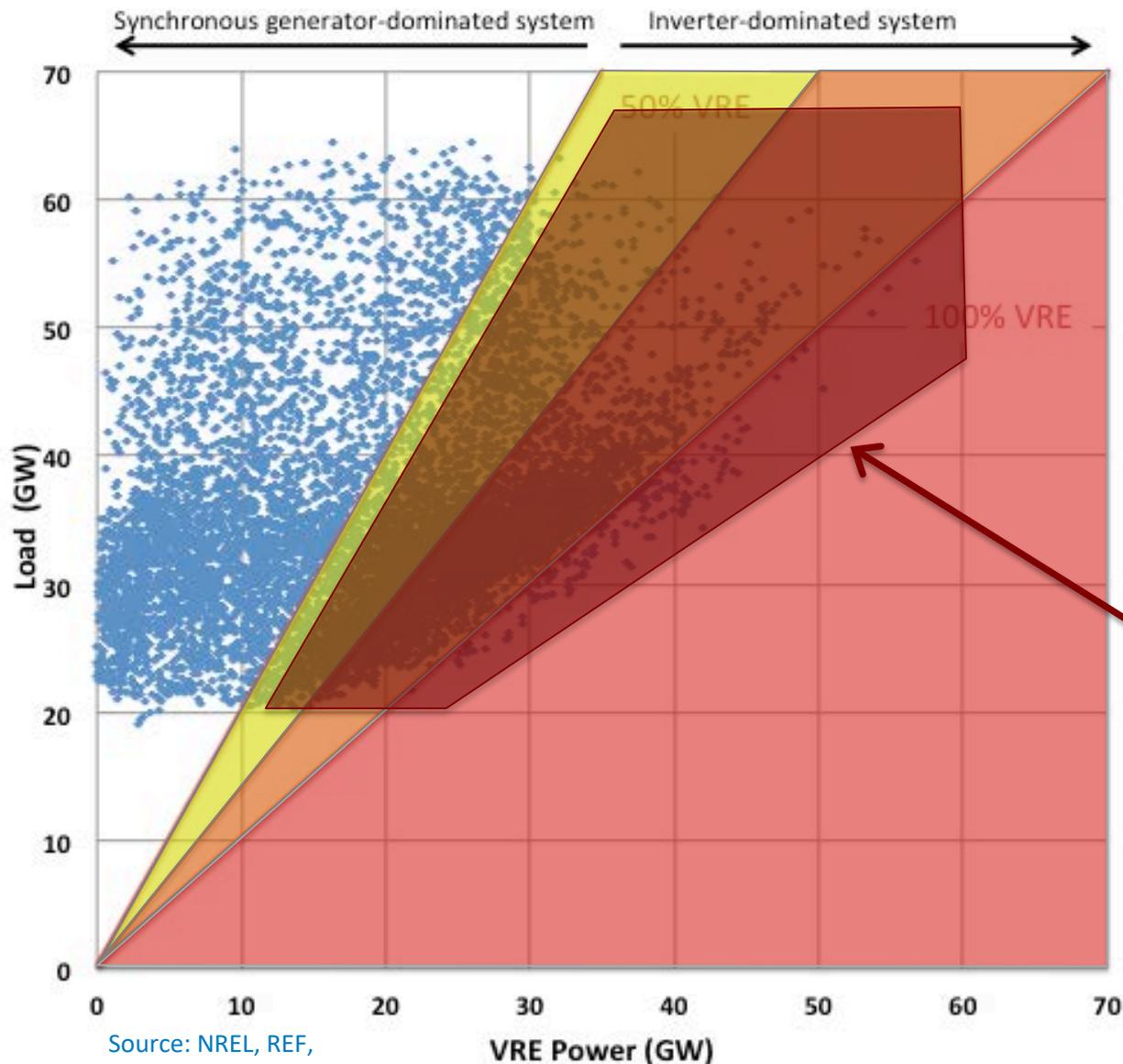
Various transmission scenarios were explored.



**VRE penetration curve for three interconnects and total REF study at 80% VRE transmission constrained scenario**

Source: NREL, REF,  
[http://www.nrel.gov/analysis/re\\_futures/](http://www.nrel.gov/analysis/re_futures/)

# Renewable Electricity Futures Study: 80%—ERCOT



**VRE vs. load for only the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) system at the 80% VRE transmission constrained scenario**

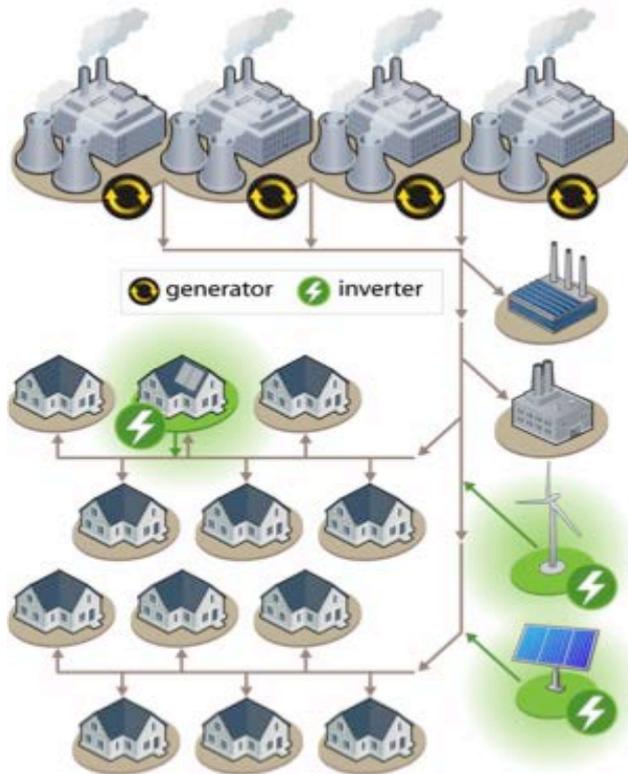
**To operate AC power grids in this region, the dependence on the physical characteristics of synchronous generator grid operation needs to change: smart inverters need to provide grid services.**

Source: NREL, REF,  
[http://www.nrel.gov/analysis/re\\_futures/](http://www.nrel.gov/analysis/re_futures/)

# Challenges and Solutions of Operating Power Systems with Very High Levels of Variable Renewable Energy

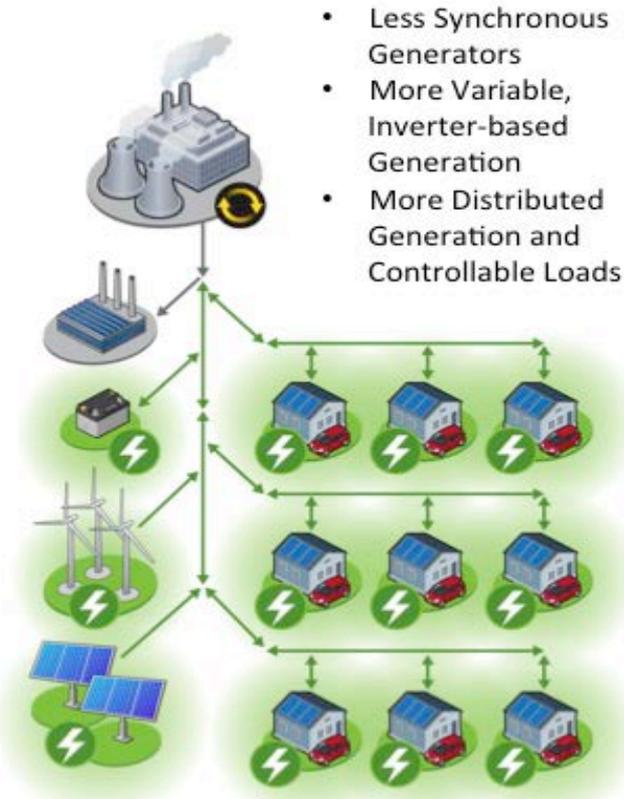
# Technical Challenges with High Levels of VRE

## Present Grid



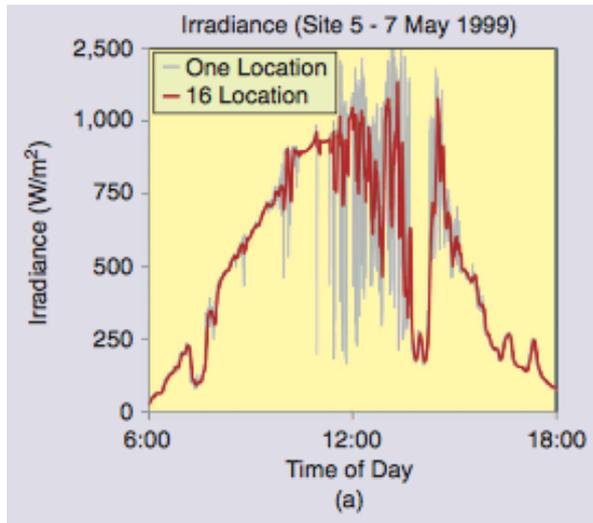
- Variability and uncertainty of VRE
- Power system stability.

## Future Grid

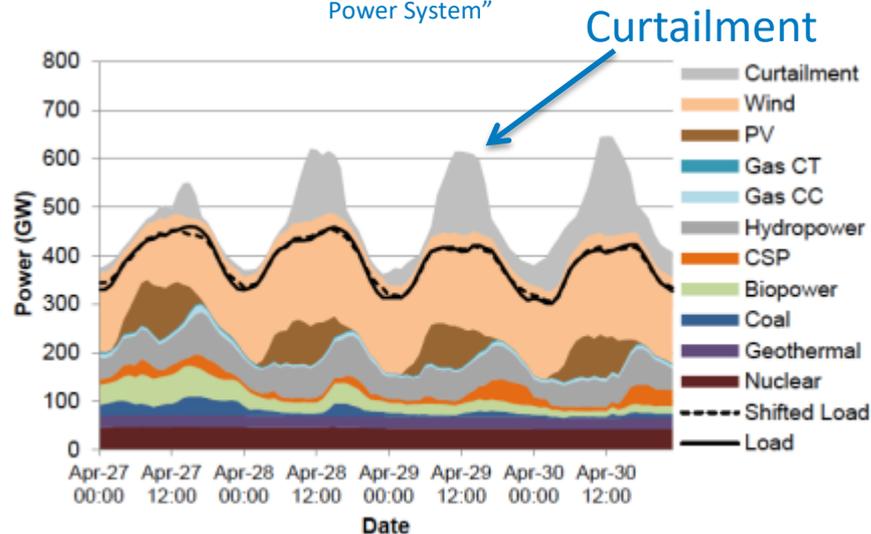


- Protection coordination
- Unintentional islanding
- Black-start capability.

# Variability and Uncertainty of VRE



Source: A Mills et al., "Dark Shadows: Understanding Variability and Uncertainty of Photovoltaics for Integration with the Electric Power System"



Source: NREL, REF:

80% Renewables Case, [http://www.nrel.gov/analysis/re\\_futures/](http://www.nrel.gov/analysis/re_futures/)

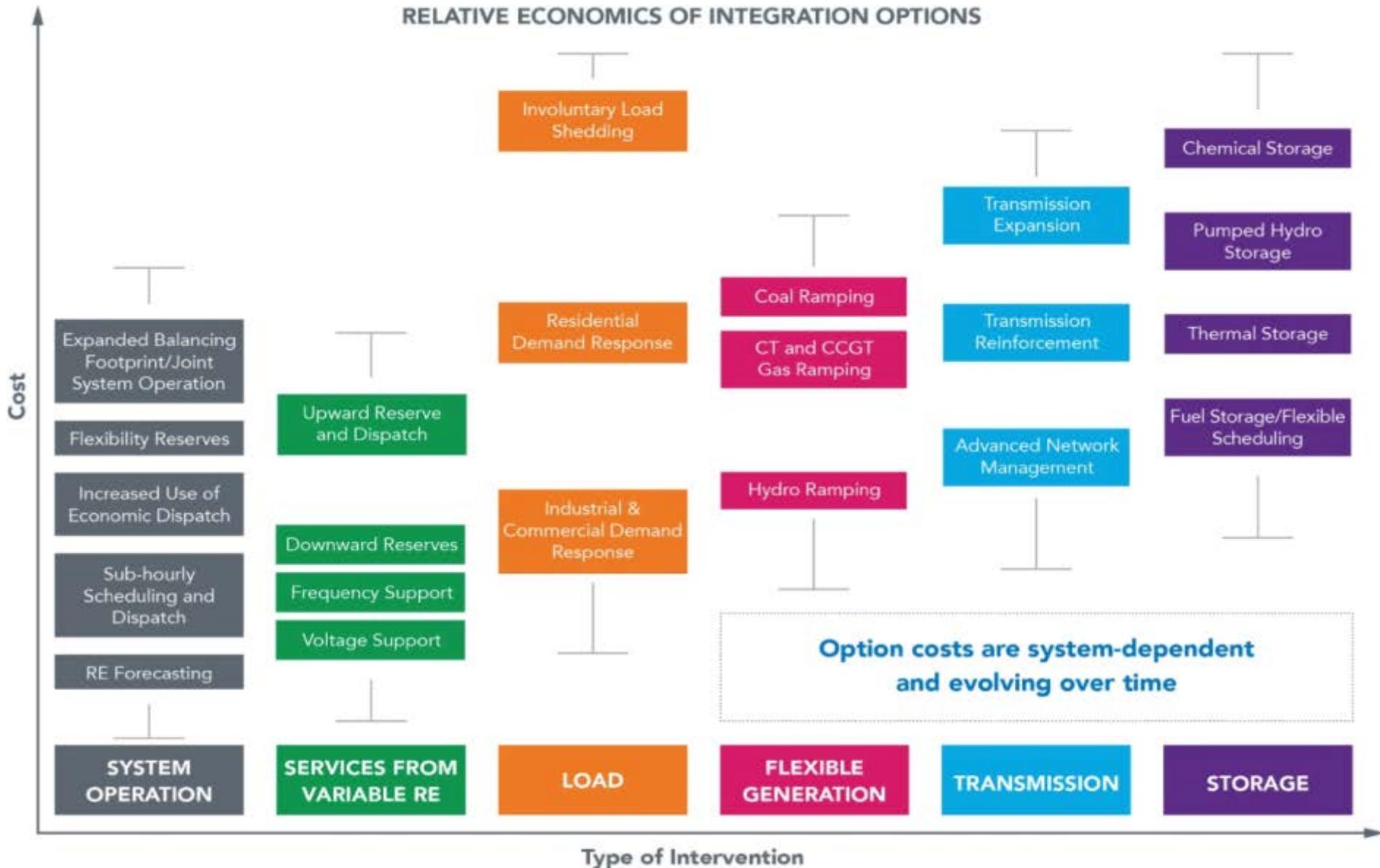
## Challenges:

- **Energy shifting** (VRE produces energy when resources are available—variable and uncertain)
- **Forecasting** (renewable resources and load).

## Solutions:

- Utilize geographic diversity.
- Utilize flexible conventional generation.
- Increase sharing among balancing authority areas.
- Expand the transmission system.
- Curtail excess VRE production.
- Coordinate flexible loads (active demand response).
- Enhance VRE and load forecasting.
- Add electrical storage.
- Interact with other energy carriers.

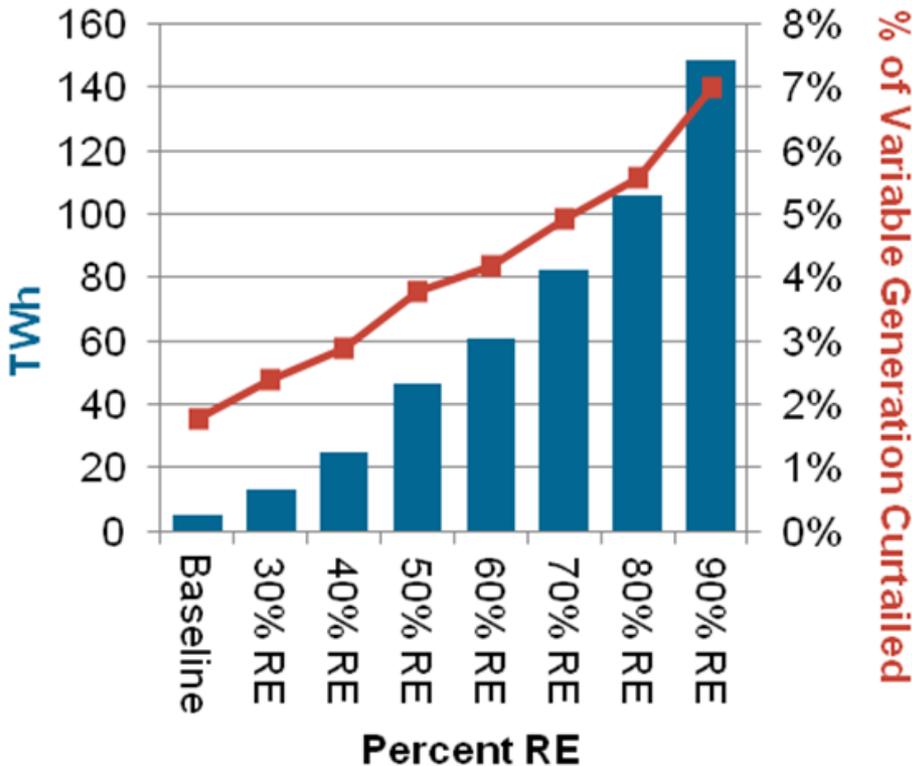
# Grid Flexibility Options



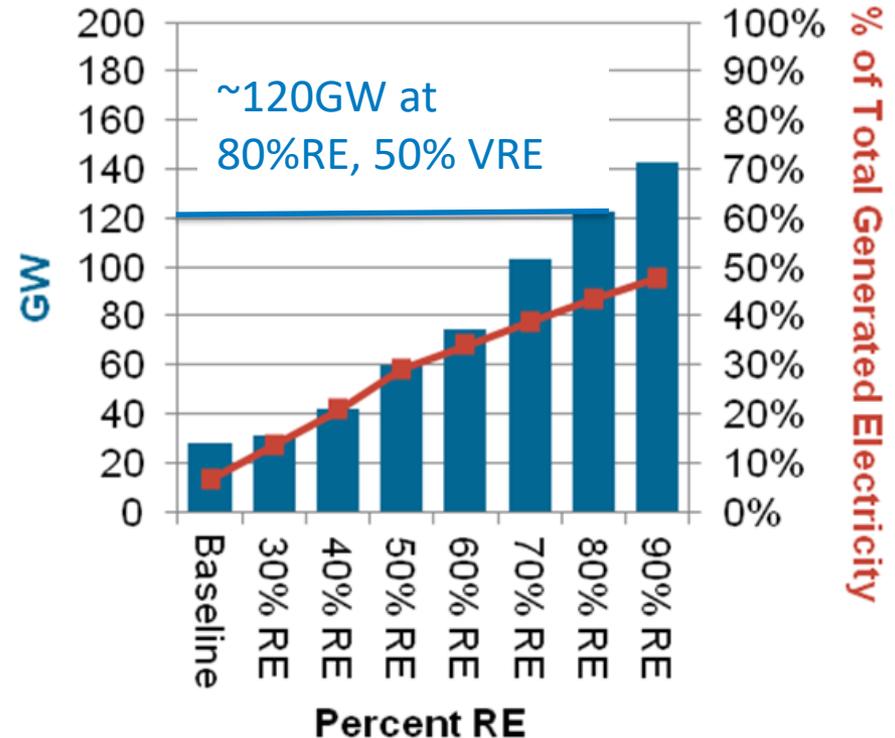
Source: J. Cochran et al., *Grid Integration and the Carrying Capacity of the U.S. Grid to Incorporate Variable Renewable Energy*, <http://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy15osti/62607.pdf>

# VRE Curtailment and Energy Storage: Renewable Electricity Futures Study

■ Curtailed Electricity



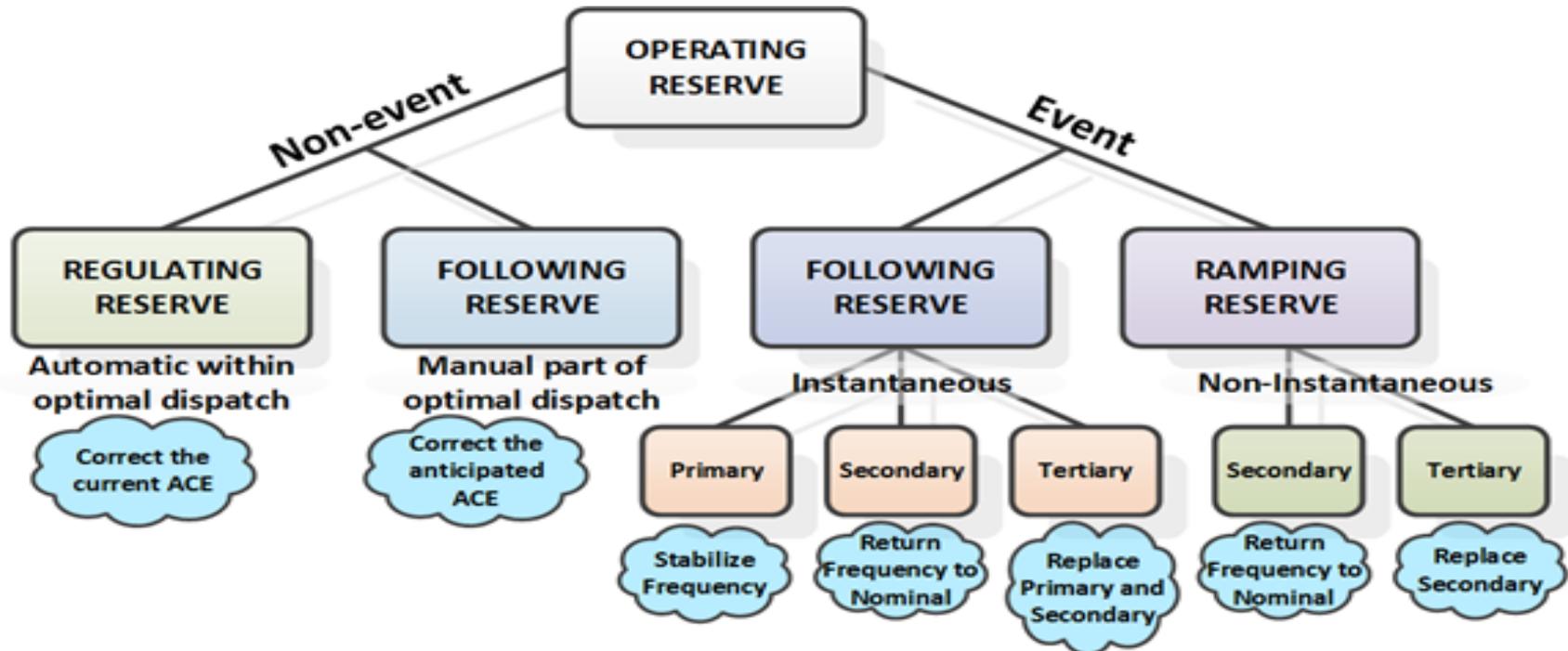
■ Storage ■ Variable Generation



By 2050, storage capacity was estimated at 28 GW in the Low-Demand Baseline scenario, 31 GW in the 30% RE scenario, 74 GW in the 60% RE scenario, **and 142 GW in the 90% RE scenario**. Currently, there is 21 GW of pumped hydro in the United States.

Source: NREL, REF,  
[http://www.nrel.gov/analysis/re\\_futures/](http://www.nrel.gov/analysis/re_futures/)

# Power System Stability



## Challenges:

- **Transient and dynamic stability** (loss of system inertia could reduce ability to respond to disturbances—need ride-through capabilities in VRE)
- **Frequency regulation** (need primary, secondary, and tertiary response from VRE)
- **Volt/VAR regulation** (need ability to locally change voltage to stay within nominal limits)

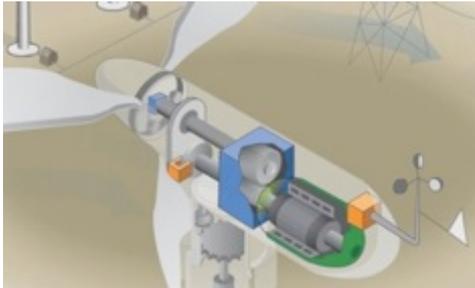
## Solutions:

- Use smart inverters with advanced functionality.
- Mimic synchronous generator characteristics.
- Provide active power, reactive power, voltage, and frequency control.

# Active Power Control from Wind and Solar Inverters

## Technology addressed:

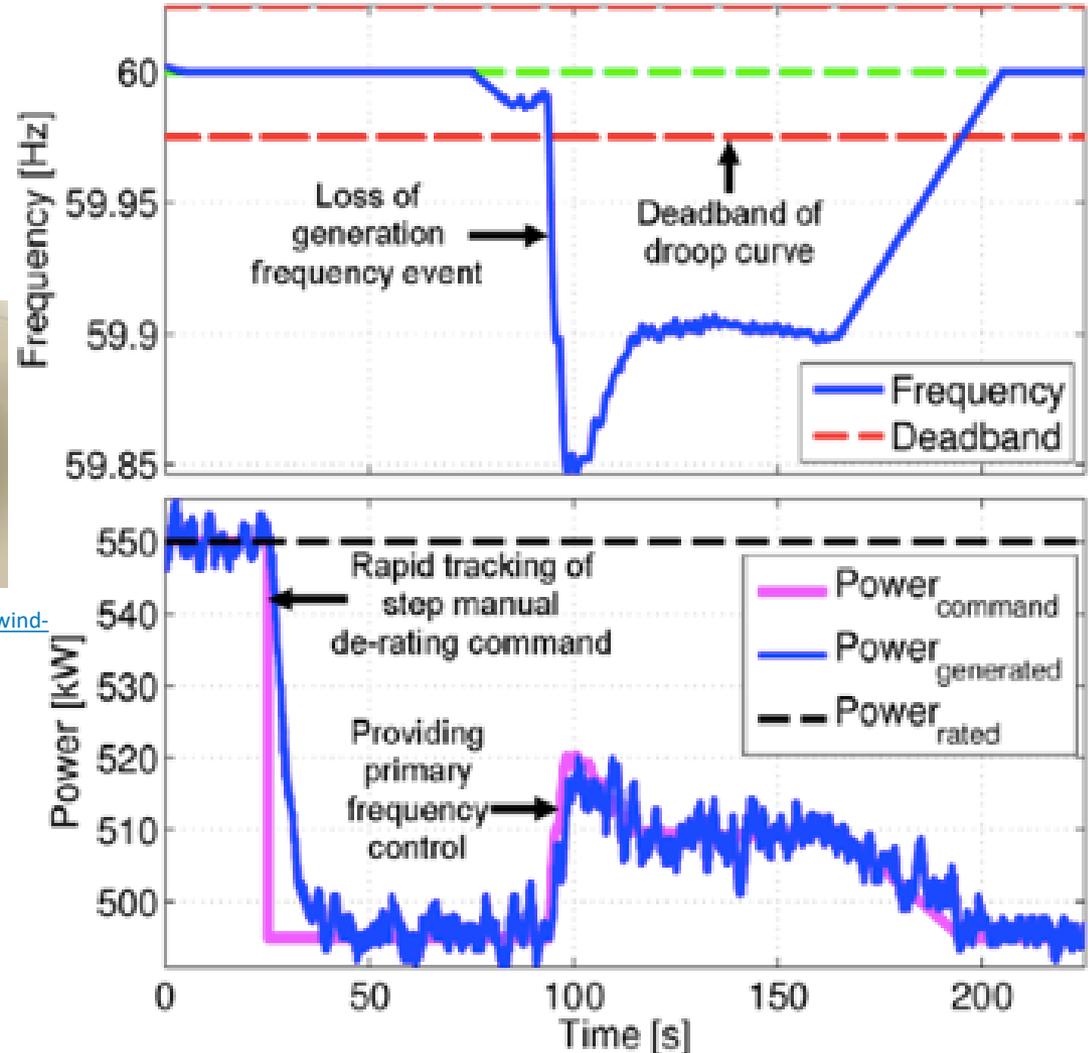
- Understanding how variable generation (wind and solar) can provide primary and secondary reserves



Source: DOE, How Do Wind Turbines Work?, <https://energy.gov/eere/wind/how-do-wind-turbines-work>

## Impact:

- Inertial control, primary frequency control, and automatic generation control (AGC) from wind and solar are feasible with negligible impacts on loading.



Source: E. Ela et al., *Active Power Controls from Wind Power: Bridging the Gaps*, <http://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy14osti/60574.pdf>

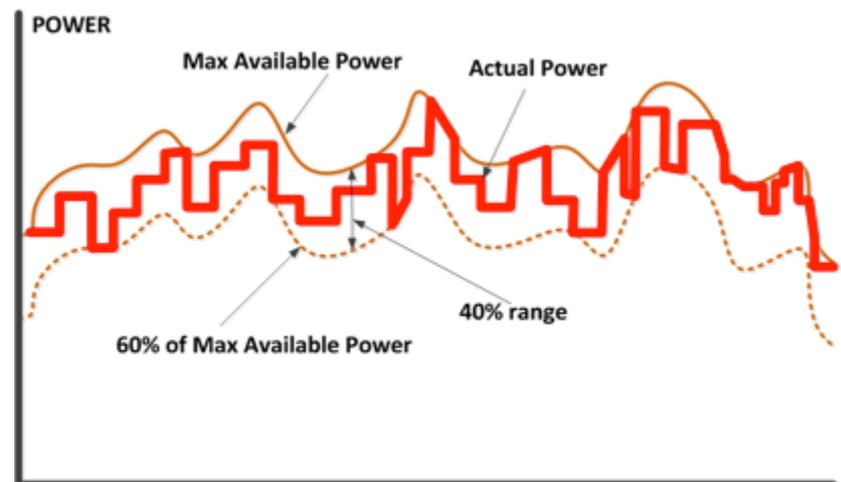
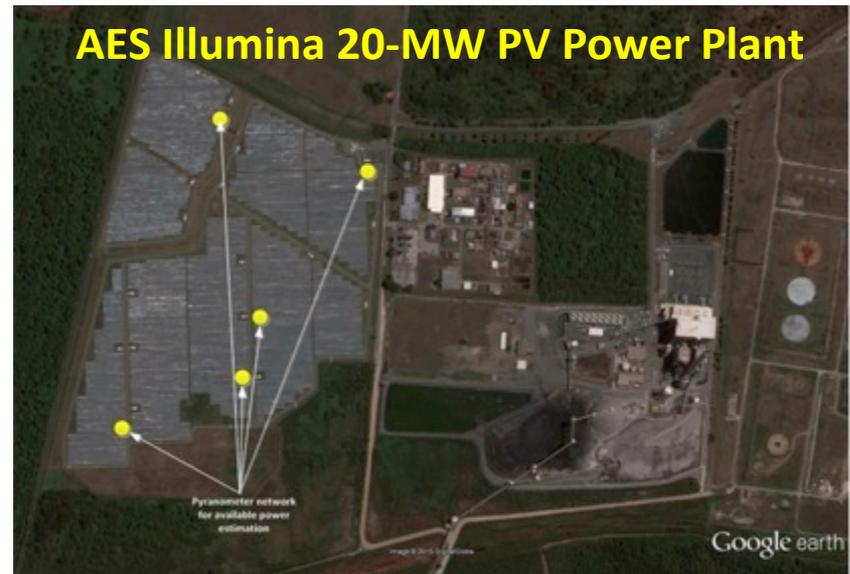
# Photovoltaic Solar Provides Grid Services for Puerto Rico

## Technology addressed:

- **PV participated in AGC.**
  - Followed AGC signal within 40% of available power.
- **PV provided frequency droop response.**
  - Both up and down-regulation
  - 5% and 3% symmetric droop.
- **PV provided fast frequency response.**
  - Evaluated plant's ability to deploy all reserves within 500 ms
  - Three new controls were implemented and validated.

### Impact:

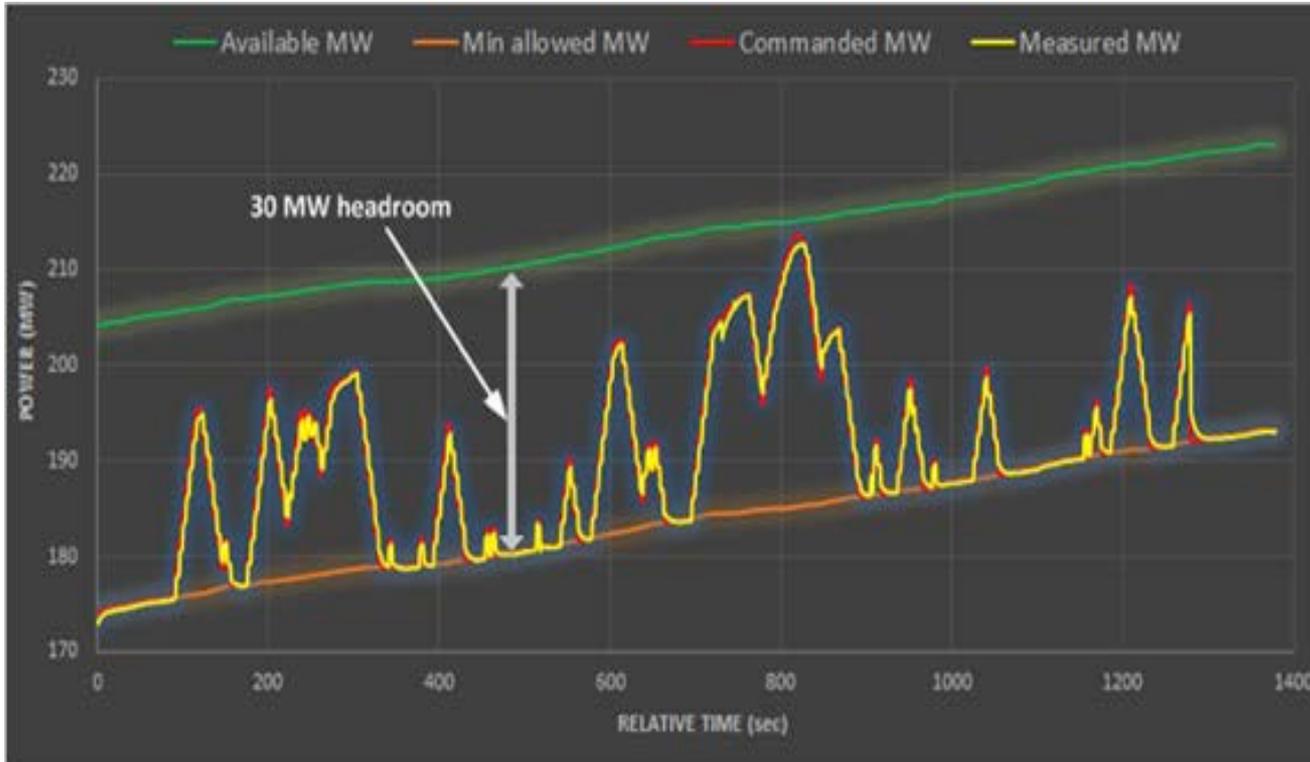
First-of-a-kind real-world experiment using PV systems to maintain large grid stability.



Source: V. Gevorgian and B. O'Neill, *Advanced Grid-Friendly Controls Demonstration Project for Utility-Scale PV Power Plants*, <http://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy16osti/65368.pdf>

# Large-Scale Photovoltaic Plant Regulation

NREL/FirstSolar/CAISO experiment: 300-MW plant following AGC signal



**300-MW PV Plant in California**



Photo from First Solar

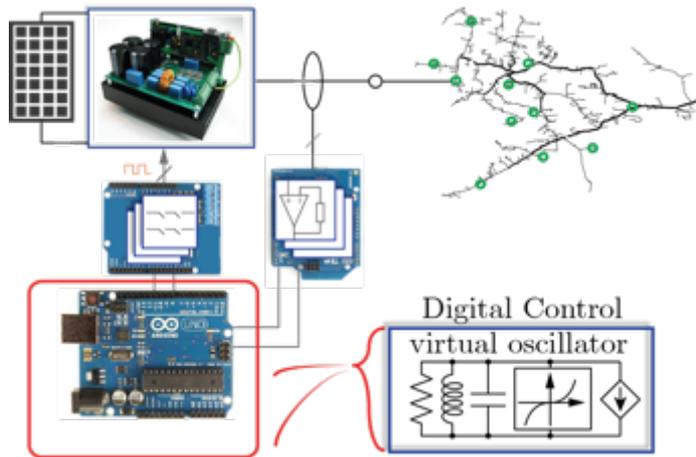
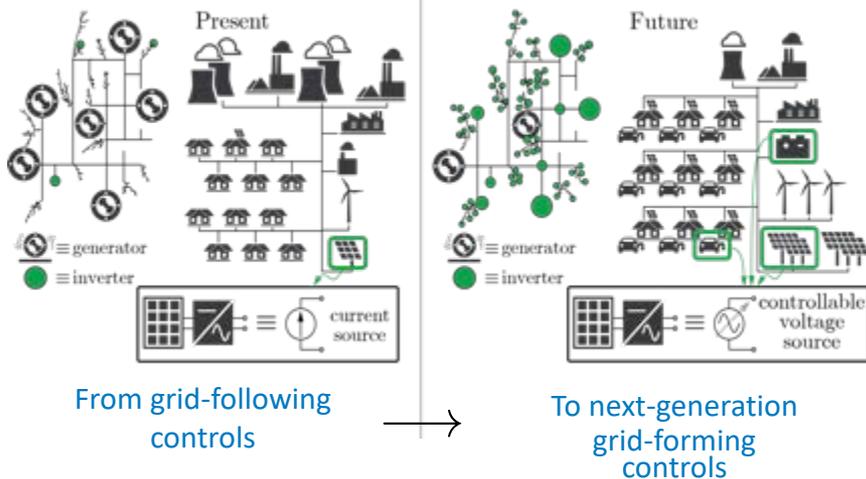
**We demonstrated that PV plants (and wind power plants) can deliver essential grid services.**

Source: C. Loutan et al., *Demonstration of Essential Reliability Services by a 300-MW Solar Photovoltaic Power Plant*,

<http://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy17osti/67799.pdf>



# SunShot: Stabilizing the Grid in 2035 and Beyond



## Project objective:

Develop distributed inverter controllers that provide a low-resistance path from the current inertia-dominated grid paradigm to a future grid paradigm dominated by low-inertia power systems with hundreds of GWs of PV integration.

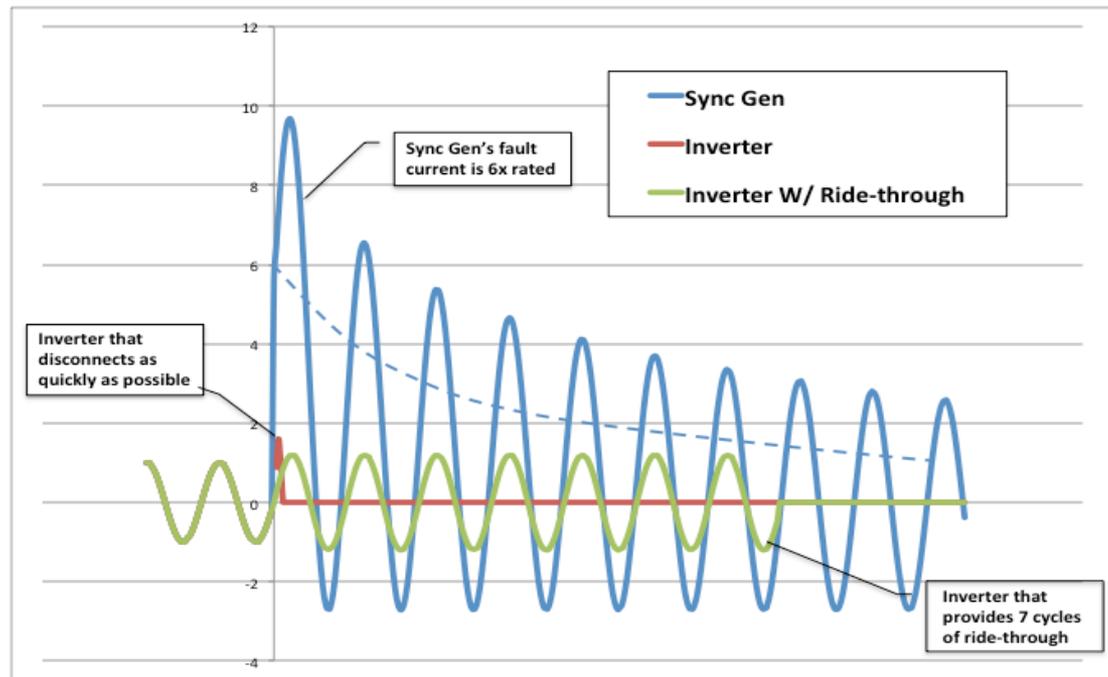
## Technical approach:

- Model, analyze, and design framework for grid-stabilizing PV inverter controllers.
- Design, build, and prototype digital microcontrollers to implement proposed PV inverter controllers.

## Project outcomes:

- Enable low-inertia and distributed infrastructures with massive PV and storage utilization.
- Perform demonstration on commercial microinverters.

# Additional Technical Challenges



Source: B. Kroposki et al., "Achieving a 100% Renewable Grid – Operating Electric Power Systems with Extremely High Levels of Variable Renewable Energy," <http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/7866938/>

## Challenges:

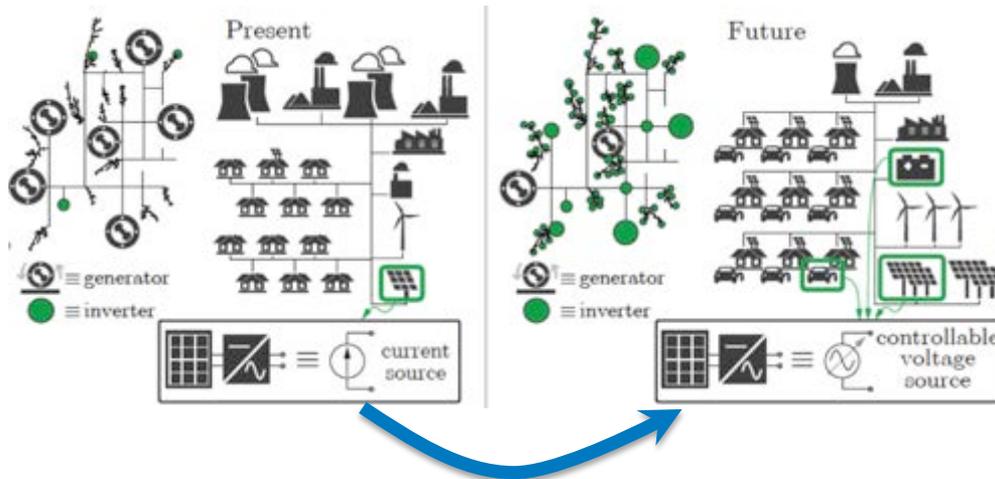
- **Protection coordination** (loss of high short-circuit current may effect protection schemes)
- **Unintentional islanding** (need methods to protect against unintentional islanding)
- **Black-start**—ability to restore system from outage
- **Distributed controls.**

## Solutions:

- **Protection coordination**—synchronous condensers, new protection schemes
- **Unintentional islanding**—New artificial intelligence options
- **Black-start**—New system restoration methods
- **Distributed controls**—new control architectures and management systems.

# Challenge: Control and Optimization of Millions of Devices

As we migrate from a centrally controlled, synchronous generator-based grid to a highly distributed, inverter-based system...

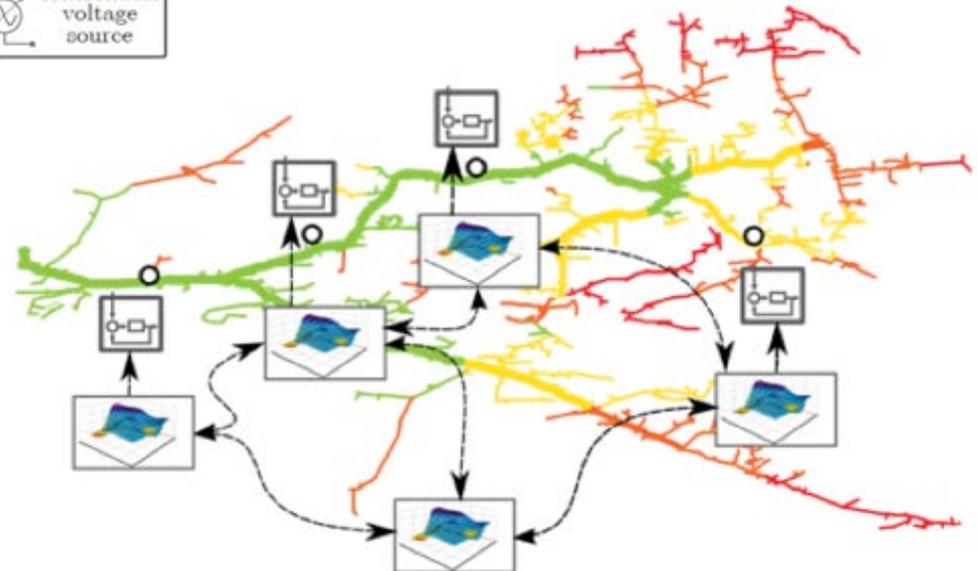


## Research Needs

- Control theory
- Advanced control and optimization algorithms
- Imbedded controllers in devices
- Linkage to advanced distribution management systems (ADMS)
- Validation of concepts and deployment.

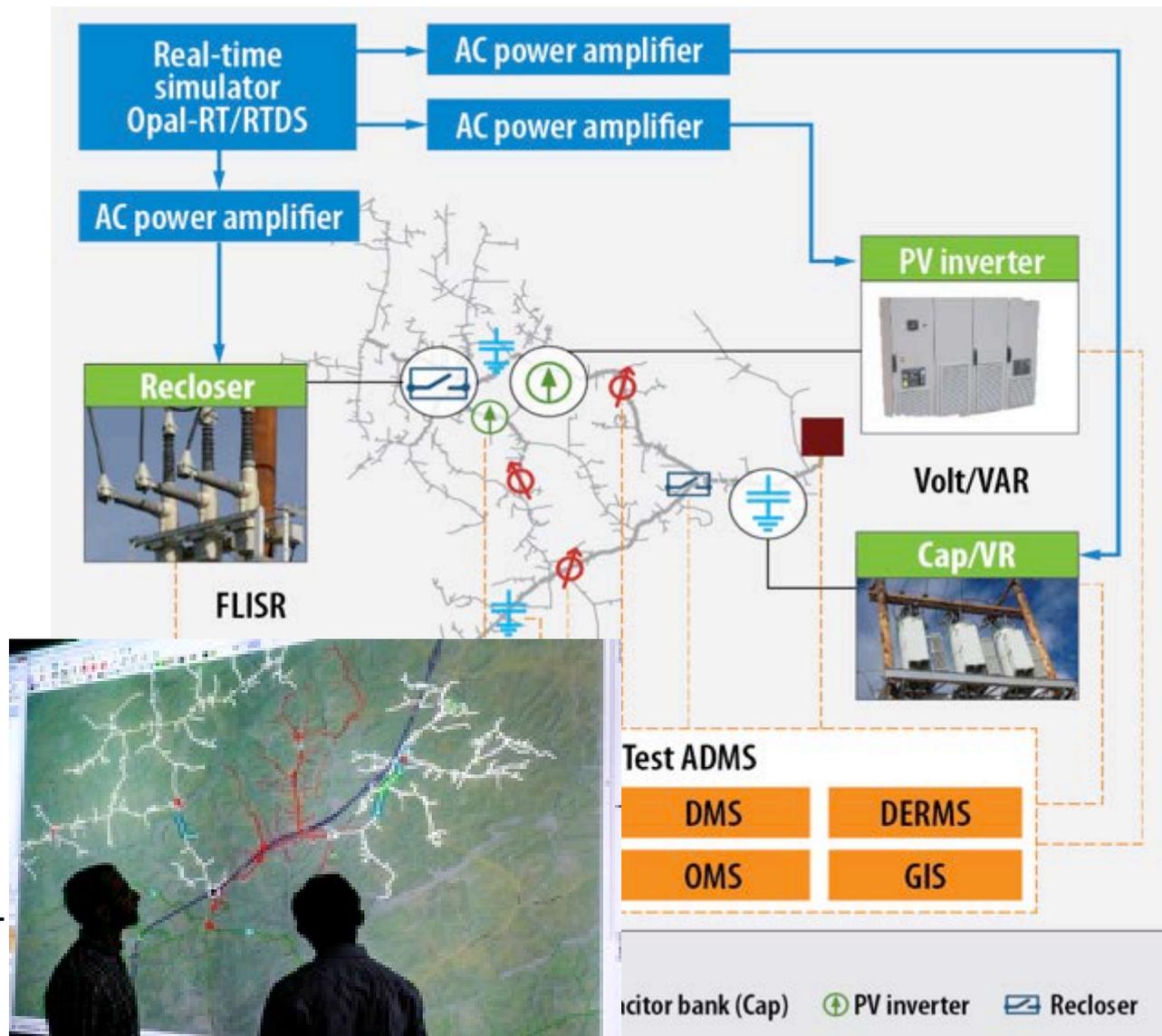
We need smart inverters with advanced functionality to maintain grid stability and...

Improved optimization for millions of controllable devices in the grid.



# Advanced Distribution Management System Test Bed

- NREL is establishing a **national, vendor-neutral ADMS test bed to accelerate industry development and adoption of ADMS capabilities.**
- This will enable utility partners, vendors, and researchers to evaluate existing and future ADMS use cases and integrate with hardware-in-the-loop (HIL) equipment.



Credit: NREL

# NREL Power Systems Research

Design and Studies

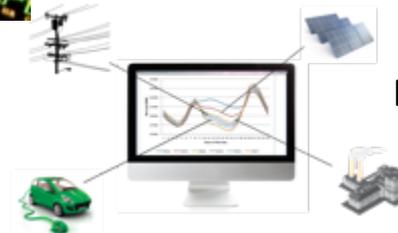
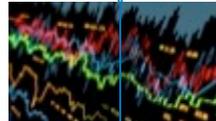
Operations and Controls

Sensing, Measurement, and Forecasting

Integrated Devices and Systems

## Reliability and Markets

Operation and Controls



Design and Studies

## Resource Measurements



Grid Sensors



## Forecasting



## Solar



## EVs



## Power Electronics



## Characterization



## Interoperability



## Wind



## Loads



## Energy Storage

## Interconnection



Physical and Cybersecurity

Institutional Support

# Energy Systems Integration Facility

<http://www.nrel.gov/esif>



Credit: NREL



Credit: NREL

**Shortening the time  
between innovation  
and practice**



Credit: NREL



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Unique capabilities:

- Multiple parallel AC and DC experimental busses (MW power level) with grid simulation and loads
- Flexible interconnection points for electricity, thermal, and fuels
- Medium-voltage (15-kV) microgrid area
- Virtual utility operations center and visualization rooms
- Smart grid lab for advanced communications and control
- Interconnectivity to external field sites for data feeds and model validation
- Petascale high-performance computing (HPC) and data management system in showcase energy-efficient data center
- MW-scale power hardware-in-the-loop simulation capability to evaluate grid scenarios with high penetrations of clean energy technologies.

# Energy Systems Integration Facility Cont.

Rooftop PV



Energy Storage

Residential,  
community  
and grid-scale storage

Smart buildings and  
controllable loads



HPC and Data Center



Outdoor Test Area

Power Systems Integration  
Grid simulators—microgrids

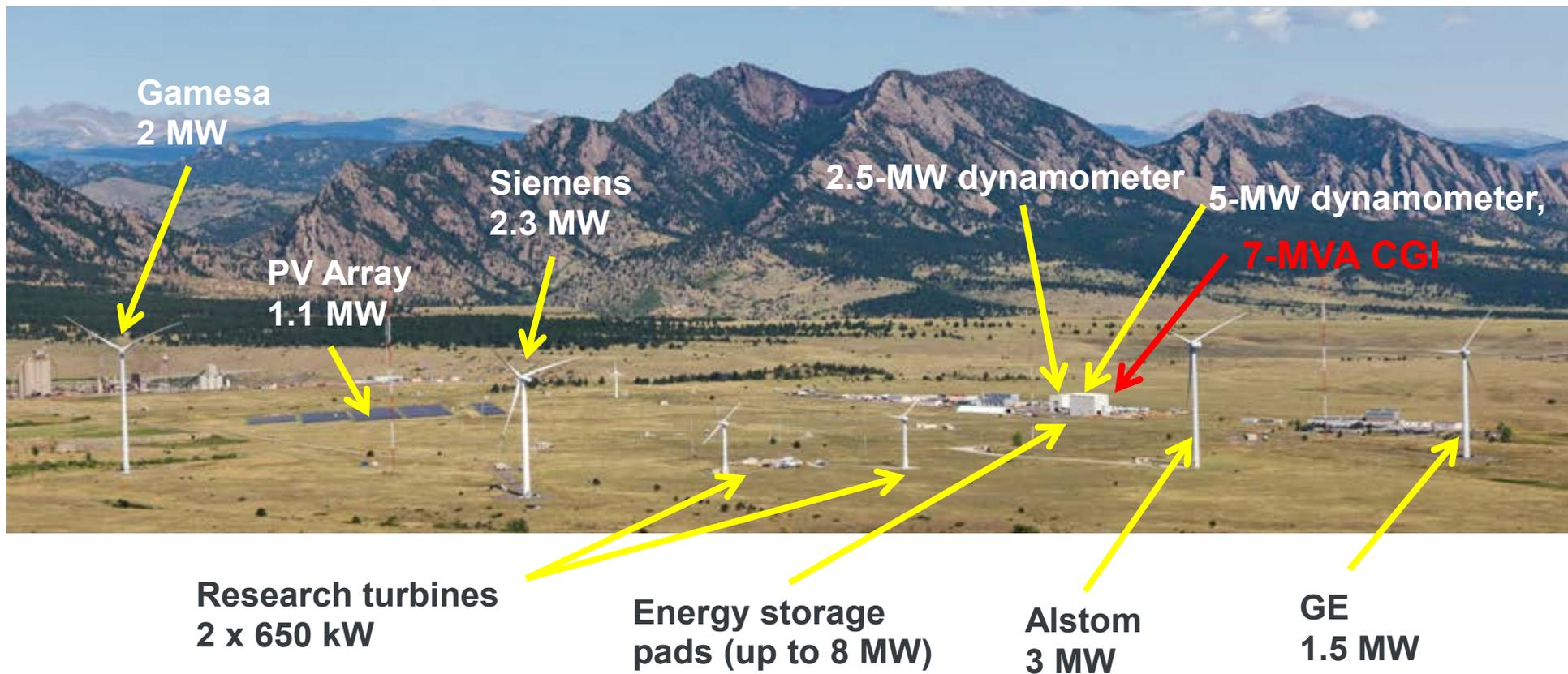
ADMS

Outdoor Areas  
EVs, transformers,  
capacitor banks,  
voltage regulators



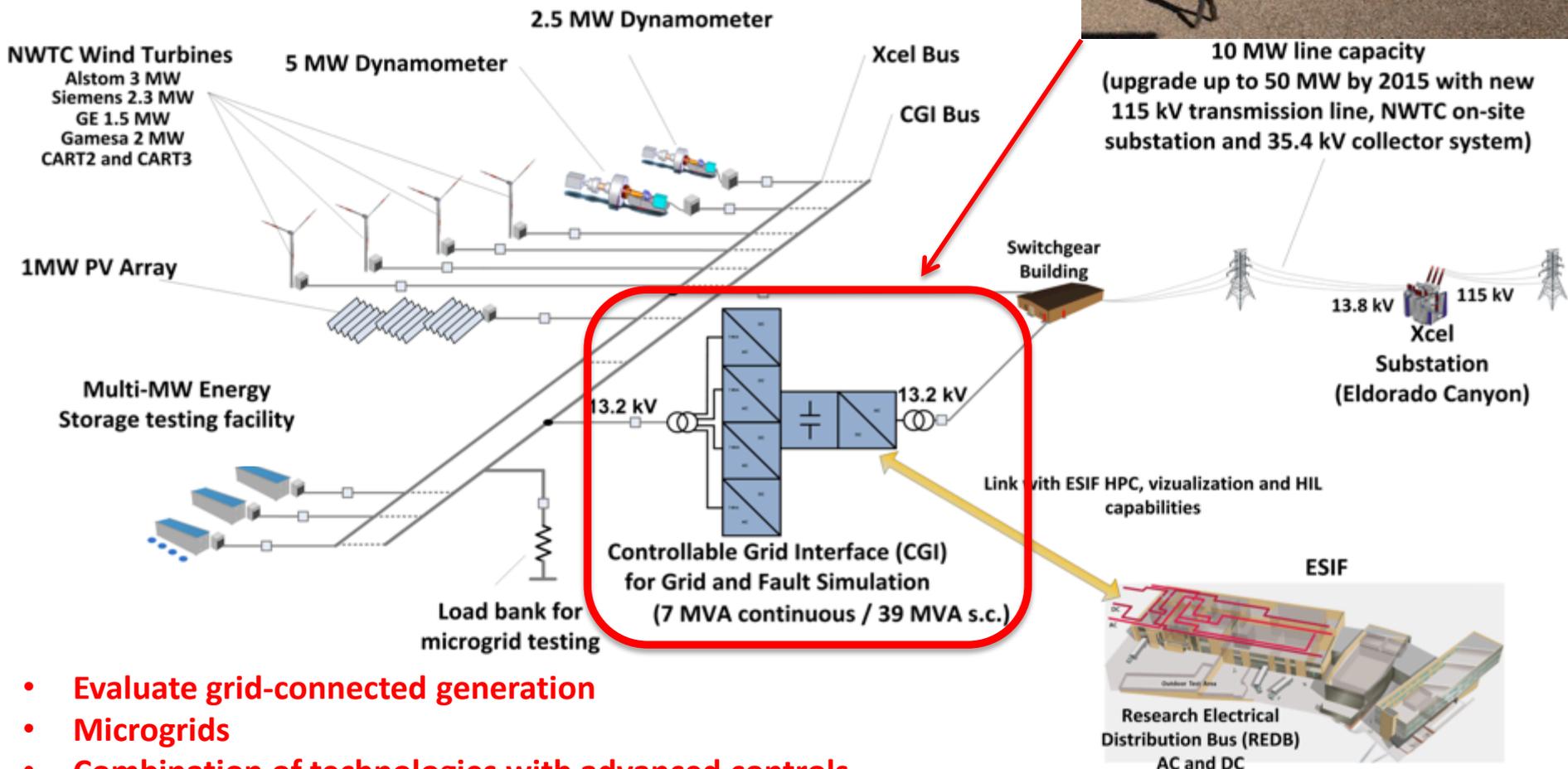
# National Wind Technology Center: Large-Scale Grid Research

- Total of 11 MW of variable renewable generation currently installed at the National Wind Technology Center (NWTC)
- Many small wind turbines (less than 100 kW) are installed as well
- 2.5-MW and 5-MW dynamometers
- **7-MVA controllable grid interface (CGI) for grid integration experiments**
- Multi-megawatt energy storage evaluation capability ready for use.



# Controllable Grid Interface

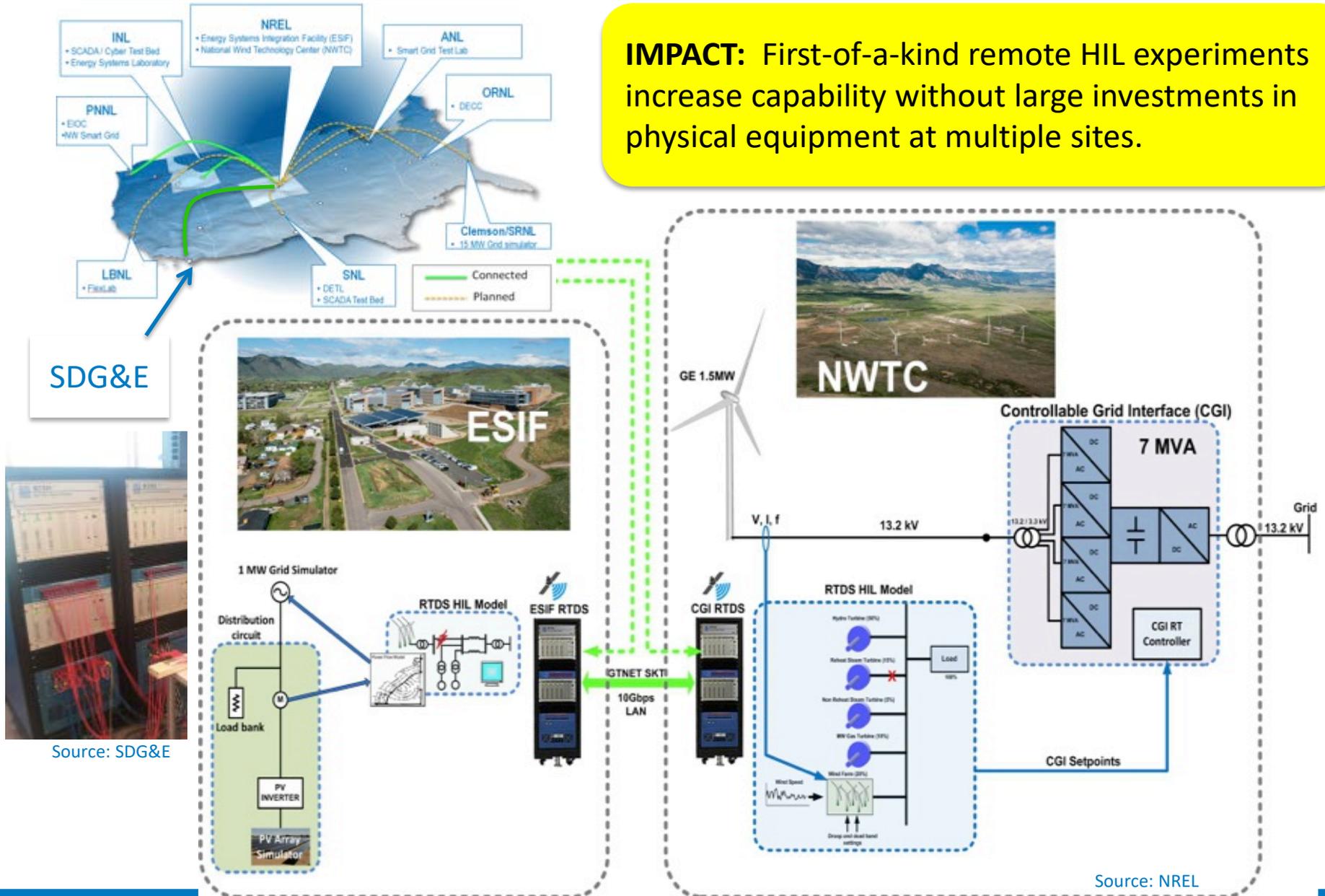
## Highly flexible and configurable system-level multi-megawatt evaluation platform



- Evaluate grid-connected generation
- Microgrids
- Combination of technologies with advanced controls.

# Remote Hardware-in-the-Loop Capability

**IMPACT:** First-of-a-kind remote HIL experiments increase capability without large investments in physical equipment at multiple sites.



SDG&E

Source: SDG&E

Source: NREL

# Research Needs in Power Systems to Achieve 100% VRE

## **Technology:**

- Advanced functionality embedded in wind and PV inverters needs to **provide all grid services** and maintain stable grid operations (act like synchronous generators).
- Grid codes and standards are needed that enforce grid stability (updates to standards from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers and North American Electric Reliability Corporation)
- Need cost-effective energy storage methods (storage, flexible demand, power-to-gas).

## **Sensing, measurement, and forecasting:**

- Improved solar, wind, and load forecasting
- Improved communications from measurements and data analytics to derive grid forecasts.

## **Power system operations and controls:**

- Better algorithms and use of grid data to make decisions for power system operations and control
- Transmission and distribution energy management systems need to be able to control millions of distributed devices.

## **Power system design and studies:**

- Need integrated transmission and distribution models to understand complexities and simulate both steady-state and dynamic conditions
- Need models that link electric power grid to other energy infrastructures
- Need models need to incorporate uncertainty and various market designs.



NREL Power Systems Engineering Center  
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# NREL: Providing Solutions to Grid Integration Challenges

## Thank You!



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