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VIEWS & VISIONS

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Nancy Bruns
Dickinson Renewables

Nancy Bruns is a seventh generation native of the Kanawha Valley and serves as Executive Chair of Dickinson Renewables and Board Chair of the John L. Dickinson Family Holding Company. She is also the co-founder and CEO of J.Q. Dickinson Salt-Works, a revival of the family's salt making heritage in West Virginia. Following in the footsteps of her Dickinson ancestors, Nancy maintains her family's commitment to community by serving on numerous civic boards in the Charleston area.

An "All of the Above Energy" Family Business

The Dickinson Family has been in the natural resources business in West Virginia for over 200 years. William Dickinson came to the Kanawha Valley in 1813 to harvest salt from the region's abundant brine springs. To stoke the salt furnaces, after the area was adequately timbered, the salt makers started to mine coal. These were the initial seeds of the successful coal industry in the state, which powered the growth of our nation for decades. William's grandson, John Q. Dickinson, saw the opportunity in the coal industry and started to acquire more land in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Hundreds of thousands of tons of coal have come off Dickinson properties over the years, and mining companies working on Dickinson land have employed tens of thousands of hard-working West Virginians.



policies in place, investing in renewable energy seemed like it would help bring more growth, additional jobs, and clean power to the market. Realizing this opportunity, Dickinson Renewables was formed.

We have partners in solar, wind, pumped hydro, battery storage, and green hydrogen. Our vision is to build utility scale renewable energy campuses with multiple types of projects on former mine land. Depending on the location, we would like to see industrial development become part of the campuses as well. The West Virginia Department of

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Once the coal has been successfully mined and the land has been reclaimed, the question looms: what's next? Over the course of several years, The Dickinson Group board worked on and considered options. *Recreation? Residential development? Commercial/industrial development?* The answer that kept surfacing was renewable energy. West Virginia is an energy state, so it made sense to stay in the industry. With climate challenges and corporate environmental, social, and governance (ESG)

Economic Development needs renewable energy projects to provide power to corporations looking to put down roots in our state. West Virginia is poised to join a global economy, with multiple types of energy available to residents, commerce, and industry. Currently, the state produces 91 percent of its power from coal-fired plants. This is not sustainable. Our next door neighbor, Virginia, is pledging to provide 100 percent of its power needs through renewable energy sources by 2050.



There are roadblocks in developing these types of projects. PJM, the grid operator in our region, has a backlog of applications for renewable energy projects. No development can occur at utility scale without PJM approval. It could be years before the applications are processed. Smaller scale projects, like Community Solar, require legislative action, but not PJM approval. The Dickinson Group has been working with state legislators to push this forward. Community Solar allows residents and businesses to be “subscribers” to the projects to lower their electricity costs from solar arrays. This is a benefit to everyone. More energy goes into the electricity distribution system, costs come down, and the grid is diversified. Surrounding states have passed legislation allowing projects such as these. West Virginia should move forward on this as well. While we wait for the PJM application process to loosen, let’s get some smaller scale projects built.

Renewable energy is not a temporary trend. Let’s stay a leader in the energy industry but diversify our sources. It’s the right path forward. **V**

