



Southwest Clean Energy Resource Team *Energy Action Plan Summary*

June 2005

BY TAKING
ADVANTAGE
OF OUR
COMMODITIES,
WE CAN
ENHANCE THE
ECONOMIC AND
ENVIRONMENTAL
ATMOSPHERE OF
OUR REGION.

CERTs Partners:

Minnesota Department of Commerce, The Minnesota Project, University of Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships, Rural Minnesota Energy Board, Metropolitan Counties Energy Task Force, Resource Conservation and Development Councils

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The Buffalo Ridge in Minnesota is well known for its wind power potential, and leads the state in ethanol and biodiesel production. Many in this agricultural region see energy production as a key economic development opportunity. The Southwest Clean Energy Resource Team met for the first time in January 2004. It is coordinated by the Rural Minnesota Energy Board, a joint powers board of 14 rural Minnesota counties committed to advancing renewable energy production in the region. The group immediately identified two overall goals: the region will be a net exporter of energy and much of that energy production will be locally owned.

A careful resource assessment showed that the region is already a net exporter of electricity, all of it from wind energy, demonstrating that their goal could be achieved and quickly built upon.

The team will work toward three key objectives:

- Encourage energy reduction through energy efficiency and conservation measures
- Increase the use of biofuels within the region
- Encourage the development of locally-owned renewable energy projects

INCREASE COLLABORATION TO INCREASE ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Renewable Energy production is a clear economic development opportunity in the region. Increasing energy efficiency

and conservation is another. Reducing energy usage and cutting heating and electric bills will help area businesses and governments be more efficient and keep dollars in the community. One strategy the team has identified is to bring the electric utilities, rural electric cooperatives and municipal utilities together with community action agencies to share resources and make a collaborative effort to facilitate pilot projects.

INCREASING USE OF BIOFUELS IN THE REGION

In May 2005, the Southwest re-examined the use of biofuels (biodiesel and ethanol) by county highway departments and also included communities of 2,500 and above. The Southwest team took steps to quantify and document the use of biofuels in the region prior to the June 2005 2% biodiesel blend mandate. The team is also in the process of identifying the number of flex fuel vehicles owned or leased by counties and cities above 2,500 and identifying any concerns or issues that would inhibit the use of flex fuel vehicles.



With encouragement from the Southwest CERT and the Rural Minnesota Rural Energy Board, Minnesota Prairie Line Railroad in Redwood Falls became the first in the country to power its locomotives with biodiesel. "We're proud to lead the way and help out Minnesota farmers," said Mark Wegner, president of the line, in a Jan/Mar. Agricultural Utilization Research Institute newsletter article.

"WE'RE PROUD TO LEAD THE WAY AND HELP OUT MINNESOTA FARMERS."

Mark Wegner, President of Minnesota Prairie Line Railroad

"Even though railways aren't included in the biodiesel mandate, this line recognizes its value as a cleaner-burning, renewable fuel," said Max Norris, AURI director of projects and technology, who has been researching and testing biodiesel feedstocks and blends for more than 15 years.

SOUTHWEST LEADS WITH LOCAL OWNERSHIP MODELS

Minnesotans in the Southwest have led the country in the development of models for locally-owned wind development. According to a September 2004 U.S. Government Accounting Office report, locally owned wind projects provide 2.5 times more jobs and 3.7 times more local economic development impact compared with projects owned by "out of area" interests. The Rural Minnesota Energy Board has been instrumental in linking new transmission development with access to the grid for locally-owned wind projects. The Board and the CERT are monitoring development of several locally-owned wind projects in the area and will assist when needed. In addition, they are working to educate local bankers about opportunities to participate in local wind development.

The Southwest team has also been active in developing county zoning models for siting wind generation facilities. A zoning report developed in collaboration with the Southwest CERT will help transfer their experience to other interested counties across the state.

As Southwest CERT moves toward its clean energy goals, the dialogues encouraging locally-owned wind development and the use of biofuels in the region show incredible potential for progress.



LCMR tour of Woodstock Wind Farm.

For More Information:

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Southwest CERT Member Snapshot:

SW CERT Core Committee

Jack Keers, Energy Board Chair, Pipestone Co. Commissioner, C-BED Steering Committee, Renewable Development Fund Board

Brian Kletscher, Energy Board Vice-Chair, Redwood Co. Commissioner, Lamberton Waste To Energy Facility Project, Farmer

Robert Ferguson, Energy Board Member, Jackson Co. Commissioner, President Heron Lake BioEnergy, Farmer

David Benson, former Energy Task Force Chair, Nobles Co. Commissioner, Interim Chair of Community Wind South LLC, Farmer

Jayme Trusty, Executive Director SW Regional Development Commission, Secretary/Treasurer SW MN Housing Partnership

Paul Pierson, USDA RD Business Program Specialist

Gary Wyatt, Regional Extension Educator

Dennis Timmerman, Project Development Director AURI

Brian Christensen, Coteau Des Prairies RC&D and Murray County SWCD

Jon Harback, Coordinator of Customized Training SW Minnesota State University

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