

Highlighting The Past, Energizing The Future

How can some of the \$13 billion Minnesotans annually spend on energy be kept in our local communities? By creating new economic opportunity. Citizens from around the state have developed a bold vision for Minnesota's energy future, through greater energy efficiency and production from clean 21st Century technologies including biofuels, wind, biomass, and solar.

Their vision is becoming a reality, one project at a time. The Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) project, launched in 2003, is connecting citizens with the technical resources they need to identify and implement community-scale energy efficiency and clean energy projects.

The Clean Energy Resource Teams are very diverse – individuals as well as small business owners, farmers, members of environmental groups, local utility representatives, local, state and federal government staff and elected leaders, academics – but they share common goals and values. They want strong communities, local jobs, and secure, clean, reliable energy.

Each team has done a careful assessment of the energy and human resources in the region. They've developed a Regional Strategic Clean Energy Plan and are implementing their project priorities. The Metropolitan Counties Energy Task Force directed its attention toward energy efficiency in buildings and spent its time on recommissioning projects to learn more about opportunities to reduce energy consumption.

Connecting people with similar interests has already made new clean energy projects possible. Academics found meaningful projects for students and ways to pilot inventions. Local utilities found creative allies for efficiency and new renewable projects. Schools and local governments found ways to cut energy costs and educate communities. Farmers and area businesses made connections that will help them solve waste problems and become energy producers.

CERTs partners include Minnesota Department of Commerce, The Minnesota Project, University of Minnesota Regional

Sustainable Development Partnerships, Rural Minnesota Energy Board, Metropolitan Counties Energy Task Force, and Resource Conservation and Development Councils.

Funding for this project was provided by The Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources from the U.S. Department of Energy Oil Overcharge Money, The Carolyn Foundation, The Blandin Foundation, Minnesota Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of Energy, University of Minnesota Initiative for Renewable Energy and the Environment, University of Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships, and the University of Minnesota, Morris Center for Small Towns.

To view the energy plans go to www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org. For more information on CERTs contact Melissa Pawlish, 612-624-2293, pawl0048@umn.edu or Lola Schoenrich, 651-645-6159, ext. 4, lschoenrich@mnproject.org.

The University of Minnesota's Initiative for Renewable Energy and the Environment awards over \$8.5 million for renewable energy research

The Initiative for Renewable Energy and the Environment (IREE) recently awarded over \$8.5 million to 24 renewable energy projects at the University of Minnesota.

The multi-year projects focus on a wide-range of topics including bio-energy and bio-products, economic and policy assessments, the production and distribution of hydrogen, carbon sequestration, advancements in nanotechnology, solar thermal heating systems, and the conversion of livestock waste to energy and products.

Sixty-one faculty members, 65 graduate students and post-docs, 18 undergraduates and 8 research scientists at University of Minnesota campuses and Research and Outreach Centers around the state will be involved with the projects.

The nature and scope of the research will position the University of Minnesota as a national leader in the development of renewable energy technologies.

"The awards, aligned with the recent MEL-IREE report on renewable energy research priorities for Minnesota, will position the University to excel in the areas where we

have the most potential," states Dean Bob Elde, chair of the IREE Executive Committee

For more information on the Initiative for Renewable Energy and the Environment and to download a list of funded projects, please visit www.iree.umn.edu or contact Dick Hemmingsen, IREE Director, (612) 625-2263, hemmings@umn.edu or Todd Reubold, IREE Assistant Director, (612) 624-6140, reub0002@umn.edu.

Farming and Soil Carbon: A Partial Solution to the Global Warming Problem

A report recently published by the Minnesota Project is intended to demystify what agricultural carbon sequestration can and cannot achieve, and to encourage debate about policy options related to agriculture. This report will be useful for both renewable energy advocates, who may not know much about farming, and agriculture advocates, who may not closely follow the global warming debate.

For more information contact

Amanda Bilek

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The report examines what agricultural carbon sequestration is and what it can accomplish in a question and answer form. It also presents current policy options and recommendations for the future, which could increase carbon capture on agricultural lands.

The report can be downloaded from the Minnesota Project website at www.mnproject.org.

If you would like a paper copy of the report, you can request one by contacting Amanda Bilek at 651-645-6159 x.5 or abilek@mnproject.org

What a difference a couple of years makes!

When Doug Tiffany looked at the feasibility of alternative fuels and implications for agriculture in 2001/2002 as part of his tenure as the School of Agriculture Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems, it drew a lot of interest.

But a few years later, his research takes on new significance given that the cost of unleaded fuel has more than doubled since he published his analyses in "The Growth of Alternative Fuels: Minnesota and U.S. Perspectives" and "Biodiesel: A Policy Choice for Minnesota".

Look them up at <http://www.misa.umn.edu/vd/endowed.htm> and <http://www.apec.umn.edu/staff/dtiffany/>

For more information contact Doug Tiffany, 612-625-6715, dtiffany@apec.umn.edu

Energy & Agriculture Research and Policy Internship

This part-time internship will be working with the Midwest Agriculture Energy Network, a network staffed by the Minnesota Project. The Network consists of agriculture and clean energy advocacy groups committed to accelerating all types of renewable energy production. They're also committed to keeping energy dollars in rural communities through local investment and ownership of renewable energy plants and technologies.

The intern will work with the Agriculture Energy Network to: Research and develop policy content and links for a new web site on clean energy and agriculture, assist in research and policy analysis for a working

group analyzing policy changes that would create opportunities for producers to be owners of renewable energy production, and assist in research and policy analysis of opportunities to advance renewable energy within the 2007 Farm Bill.

For more information contact

Lola Schoenrich

651-645-6159 ext. 4.

lschoenrich@mnproject.org

This is a part-time position, 15 – 20 hours per week for the spring 2006 semester located in The Minnesota Project office in St. Paul. Compensation is from \$12 to \$15/hr, depending on experience and education.

Please send, fax or email a resume to: Lola Schoenrich; The Minnesota Project; 1885 University Ave. W., Suite 315; St. Paul, MN 55104 or Fax: 651-645-1262; Phone: 651-645-6159 ext. 4.
lschoenrich@mnproject.org

“Local Food: Where to Find It, How to Buy It”

The title says it all. This 30-page booklet was developed for consumers who are interested in supporting rural communities by buying locally grown food, but don't know how to begin—there are a lot of people out there who don't know what a CSA is! Developed by MISA in cooperation with our many partner organizations and beautifully designed by the Renewing the Countryside folks, this book steps you through everything from finding a nearby farmers' market, ordering through a network of nearby farmers, to freezing summer produce for winter eating. Copies are available from the MISA office, and it can be viewed online at: http://www.misa.umn.edu/Local_Food_Consumer.html

Local Food: Where to Find It, How to Buy it

[http://www.misa.umn.edu/
Local_Food_Consumer.html](http://www.misa.umn.edu/Local_Food_Consumer.html)

1-800-909-MISA

You can also learn more about local sustainably-produced foods in the Twin Cities while enjoying holiday treats and chatting with staff from the Land Stewardship Project's White Bear Lake office on Thursday, Dec. 15, from 4 to 6:30 p.m. The holiday gathering will feature showings of *Voices of Minnesota Farm Women*, a film that illustrates the importance of supportive relationships between stewardship farmers and the people who buy food. LSP has developed an educational packet that includes a DVD of the film, and a copy of *Local Food: Where to Find it, How to Buy it*. Did we mention the prize drawings and silent auction—featuring, of course, locally produced products. For directions or more information, visit www.landstewardshipproject.org, or call 651-653-0618.

2006 National SARE Conference

We want to learn from you! Don't miss the opportunity to share your research findings, educational successes and on-farm experiences with a large audience interested in innovative agriculture, community development, renewable energy and more at the August 2006 national SARE conference. The conference will celebrate successes in agriculture and look ahead to advance systems that are profitable, environmentally sound and good for

communities. All presenters receive free registration and travel costs. Farmers are eligible for an honorarium.

Present your experiences at a workshop session, author a poster or organize a roundtable discussion at “A Midwest Homecoming: Sharing a New Tradition of Sustainability,” Aug. 15-17 in Oconomowoc, Wis. See the call for presenters at www.sare2006.org for details.

Conference organizers are striving for diverse participation. Special invitations for farmers and youth are included in the call.

The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, USDA, sponsors biennial conferences to showcase cutting-edge work in sustainable agriculture. The 2006 conference will be hosted by North Central Region SARE. The deadline for applications is Dec. 30, 2005.

Upcoming Events

Crow River Sustainable Farming Conference & Annual Meeting. January 7, 2006. The Sustainable Farming Association's Crow River Chapter is presenting its annual Sustainable Farming Conference and Membership Meeting. In addition to several special interest sessions, an exposition area and a fabulous farm feast, the keynote speaker will be the Environmental Sustainability Director for AVEDA, Mary Tkach. For registration information: Call or email Jerry Ford, Crow River Chapter President - jerry@marienne.com or 320-543-3394.

Family Farms and Rural Communities: A Tribute. January 9- February 10, 2006. Northfield, MN. A group of 14 artists from

around the state have come together to give us a glimpse into the rural landscape as they see it—the farm families, the livestock, the fields of grain, the small towns and their main streets. This show is not meant to celebrate a bygone day, but a hope for the future. The show is sponsored by Minnesota COACT, Minnesota Farmers Union, Land Stewardship Project and Clean Water Action Alliance. For more information call 507-645-8877.

Growing our Future: Tools and Inspiration for Beginning and Transitioning Farmers 2006 PFI Annual Conference. January 13-14, 2006, Des Moines, IA. This year's 2006 Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference will be

at the Des Moines Airport Holiday Inn, Des Moines, IA and will focus on the needs of a new generation of farmers committed to sustainable agriculture—whether they are starting out fresh or transitioning to new practices and markets. A keynote panel and full track of workshops will focus on the subject. www.practicalfarmers.org, 515-232-5661.

Minnesota Organic and Grazing Conference and Trade Show. St. Cloud, MN. January 20-21, 2006. For more information, call Mary Hanks or Meg Moynihan at 651-201-6012.

Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture

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You can find more University of Minnesota Extension Service educational information at www.extension.umn.edu. Also check MISA’s home page at www.misa.umn.edu.

Our mission statement: To help bring people together to influence the future of agriculture and rural communities to achieve socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable farms and communities. To stimulate thinking and discussion about sustainability, we try to present items that reflect different points of view. This being the case, we aren’t promoting and don’t necessarily agree with everything we publish.