

Seeking Sustainable Local Energy Solutions

CERTS Conference

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Why?

Began as an ad-hoc group of energy consumers, each concerned about some aspects of energy sustainability, cost, and conservation.

“Economic Prosperity, Environmental Sustainability, and Social Justice will not happen without a concerted collaborative effort! GRēN understands that change doesn’t come without resistance and is therefore committed to breaking down social, political, and cultural divides in our community through non-violent communication and conflict resolution in order to make the best energy decisions for our area.”

Originally established as subcommittee of First Lutheran Church’s Stewardship Committee.

When?

*First meeting held **November 11th, 2009**; began to meet the second Tuesday of every month*

Brainstormed goals for the region

Invited a local utility director to speak

Some of the goals for the region established at that meeting:

- 1. Engage with the community through group meetings to discuss and implement energy saving measures*
- 2. Prioritize energy assistance to low income families*
- 3. Develop frameworks for concerned citizens to learn about energy issues and voice their opinions*
- 4. Create a long term vision of 100% renewable energy for our community using domestic resources*
- 5. Break down barriers to technological changes to our energy system that will benefit society as a whole*

Task Teams

- Efficiency and Conservation
- Generation and Transmission
- Waste Cycling
- Policy

Efficiency and Conservation

Our homes and businesses are not currently sustainable. We currently have the technology and ingenuity to renovate or build much more efficient structures which will not only reduce operating expenses but also lead to a greener future.

To this end the Efficiency and Conservation team is:

- **Facilitating tours of the world renowned [Biohaus](#), which meets the stringent Passive House standards.**
- **Assisting [Harmony Foods Cooperative](#) as they prepare to renovate.**
- **Assisting Beltrami Electric Cooperative to meet its CIP goals through**
 - **Consumer education and awareness**
 - **Review of rate structures for consumer members**
 - **Promoting acceptance of fair net-metering policies for energy-producing members**

Generation and Transmission

The majority of our energy is currently being sourced from fossil fuels. The use of fossil fuels degrades our environment by contributing to global warming and polluting our lakes with Mercury. Renewable sources of energy must replace fossil fuels to make our future sustainable.

To this end the Generation and Transmission team is pursuing two projects:

- 1. Determining the feasibility of adding Solar Panels (pv) to the Bemidji Regional Events Center (Sanford Center).**
- 2. Pursuing a grant to enact the recommendations of that plan.**

Waste Cycling

The production and transportation of goods uses a lot of energy. By reducing, reusing, and recycling the goods that we use, we can lead a more sustainable lifestyle.

To this end the waste cycling team is pursuing two projects:

- An MPCA grant to begin a composting program at Concordia Language Villages/ Schoolcraft Learning Community.**
- The development of an educative website, with relevant local information, guiding community members to where their goods they no longer want can be reused or recycled.**

Policy

- State Law – promoting sustainable energy and green jobs
- Capital credit disbursement options
- Net metering
- Incentives for energy upgrades

Future Opportunities

- GRēN is exploring possibilities for
 - A project to make two BSU residence halls energy independent
 - Assisting BSU with achieving carbon neutrality
 - Assisting BSU with on-street parking congestion
 - Assisting BSU with on-campus housing cost reductions and relief of overcrowding of off-campus housing
- GRēN is presently in the process of spinning off a partner business aimed at assisting utility rate-payers with lowering their utility bills.

"We are like tenant farmers chopping down the fence around our house for fuel when we should be using nature's inexhaustible sources of energy -sun, wind and tide. ... I'd put my money on the sun and solar energy. What a source of power! I hope we don't have to wait until oil and coal run out before we tackle that."

-- Thomas Edison to Henry Ford and Harvey Firestone (1931)

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