Central Region CERTs Meeting Summary
Rural Renewable Energy Alliance (RREAL) Tour and SRCC Sendoff Party
Hunt Utilities Group Research Campus – Pine River, Minnesota
Thursday, October 11th, 2007

Read the October 17th Pine River Journal article here:
http://www.pineandlakes.com/stories/101707/news_20071017097.shtml

To view the Grist interview with Jason Edens, visit
http://www.grist.org/comments/interactivist/2006/03/27/edens/.

Central CERT Steering Committee meeting: 4:30pm – 5:30 pm
RREAL Tour & Party: 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

Directions to visit RREAL and the Hunt Utility Group campus: Coming from the south on 371, turn west (left) at the stoplight on County Road 2, go about 2/3 of a mile and take a right at the wind turbine. RREAL is located in the building with their beautiful solar thermal panels being installed along the front.

RREAL phone number: 218-587-4753

AGENDA

5:30 pm **Introductions, announcements and pizza**

There were forty two attendees at the big solar thermal-fest; sorry for any misspellings of those that signed in: Sarah Hayden, Graham Wright, Lynn Hunt, Ryan Hunt, Paul Hunt, Jason Edens, BJ Allen, Brad Knight, Rin Porter, Eharles Krysel, Dan Kayser, Evangeline Moen, Chad Haugen, Paul Simonson, LuAnn Nelson, Diane McCormack, Wayne Pryor, Pete Parsons, Dallas Flynn, Tony Mayer, Pam Mahling, Nolita Christensen, Chris Fastner, Kathleen McCarthy, Joel Haskard, Linda Ulland, Rep. Brita Sailer, and Danielle Butenhoff.

6:00 pm **Tour of the Rural Renewable Energy Alliance manufacturing facility and Party**

October 11th was a BIG day for RREAL http://www.rreal.org/ … They submitted five solar thermal collectors to the Solar Rating and Certification Corporation (SRCC) http://www.solar-rating.org/ to get their newly engineered/manufactured panels certified!

Folks were able to take a tour of the RREAL office/manufacturing plant, see the new panels, and learn about RREAL's plans for the future. Located on the Hunt Utility Group (HUG) campus, highlights included straw bale building construction, composting toilets, wind turbines, geothermal design, and other clean energy technologies and practices. For more information about HUG , see:
http://www.hugllc.com/index.php?pageKey=4

Joel Haskard with CERTs started off the meeting with a brief introduction about CERTs and thanked Linda Ulland with the Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership http://www.regionalpartnerships.umn.edu/index.pl?id=0 for the pizza. Jason Edens, RREAL's director, gave an overview of RREAL. The Rural Renewable Energy Alliance is a 501(c)(3) non-profit grassroots organization pairing Social Activism with Solar Energy in their commitment to bring solar heat to low-income households. Through their Solar Assistance Program, RREAL provides clean solar heating systems to low-income families that qualify for federal energy assistance. He explained that the Federal fuel assistance program, which helps low income families pay their heating bills is in some ways a fossil fuel subsidy, and rather than paying the family's bill for them, RREAL strives to give the family independence from the assistance program, and to be able to heat their homes with renewable solar heat. Because using solar collectors in Minnesota is very practical (even in the winter), using these in an energy assistance program will bring Minnesota closer to its Renewable Energy Standard.

RREAL began their work by using refurbished solar thermal collectors, but have now taken the bold step to build their own collectors. These collectors are designed to be a fifty year product, a low cost/ high performance system that is compatible with duct work and easy to assemble.

BJ, Sarah and Graham with RREAL filled in the group about the construction of the panels. Because indoor air quality is very important, their solar collectors do not use fiberglass, and they minimized the amount of caulking needed. They found the absorber plates they needed only in Germany, and they designed their own air seal. Ryan Hunt showed the panels being installed on the exterior of the building as a pilot project; 67 collectors will capture enough heat in five hours on a sunny winter day to provide five days of heat. This will be a 2,500 square feet installation and one of the largest solar air heating systems in the country, expected to provide 150 to 200 million BTUs per winter heating season. The heat will be delivered via ten miles of underground tubing designed by HUG.

The current panels are 4 X 10 and weigh about 170 pounds, but RREAL hopes to manufacture 4 X 6 and 4X 8 panels as well. The certification will take place in Canada and costs $30,000.

The group learned a lot and finished the night by singing Happy Birthday to Jason.

Congratulations to RREAL for their hard work and success in making renewable accessible for everyone!

7:30 pm Meeting adjourns