

Coleman announces renewable energy grants available

U.S. Senator Norm Coleman announced Minnesota farmers and rural small business owners may be eligible to apply for USDA Rural Development's Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements Program. The program, which provides loan guarantees and grants to qualified participants, is available to agricultural producers and rural small businesses to purchase and install renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements. Eligible projects include wind, solar, geothermal, methane, ethanol, biodiesel, grain dryers and corn burners. Nationwide, USDA Rural Development has invested \$674 million in more than 1,763 renewable energy and energy efficiency projects since 2001. Minnesota leads the nation with over \$18.5 million in grants since this program's inception in 2003.

- To find more information on this grant program, or to obtain an application, please visit: www.rurdev.usda.gov/mn/RBS/Section%209006%20Renewable%20Energy%20Program.htm
- Interested parties can also contact Lisa Noty with Rural Development at (507) 373-7960, ext. 120, or lisa.noty@mn.usda.gov (*Wadena Pioneer Journal - 03/20/2008*).

Lawmakers consider bag recycling bill

Swedish retailer Ikea announced plans in February 2007 to begin charging customers 5 cents per plastic bag in an effort to encourage people to bring home their goods in reusable bags and cut down on plastic waste. While charging people for plastic bags has yet to become common practice, Minnesota lawmakers are considering a law that would require retailers to make plastic bag recycling more convenient. A bill sponsored by Rep. Josh Lesch and Sen. Ellen Anderson, both of St. Paul, would require grocers and other retailers who provide their customers with plastic carryout bags to make in-store bag recycling available to them. A couple of area businesses already have voluntary plastic bag recycling programs. Wal-Mart stores have offered bag recycling for at least five years, Litchfield store manager Beth Pascoe said. The Litchfield store has bins inside each of its entrances. Pascoe said offering recycling is part of the business' role as a community partner. "I think it's a good idea," Pascoe said of the law. "We have a lot of customers that do bring their bags back, not only Wal-Mart bags but other shopping bags, as well." Store manager Tim Stocker said Econofoods has offered plastic bag recycling off and on for many years depending on whether there are recycling companies willing to take the bags. The drop off bin is to the left of the entrance doors. Litchfield retailers Family Dollar, Pamida and Save-A-Lot do not have plastic bag recycling in-store, but it's something all would consider. (by Kristin Holtz)

Climate change gesture: Minneapolis unplugging for 1 hour

Except for what is absolutely necessary, all lights in city of Minneapolis municipal buildings will be turned off for one hour on a Saturday evening later this month in what is being billed as "Earth Hour." Several privately operated buildings also are joining in from 8-9 p.m. on March 29, among them: the Wells Fargo Center, the IDS Center, Thrivent Financial, U.S. Bancorp and the State, Orpheum and Pantages theaters, the city said in a news release. Look for the decorative underside of the Stone Arch Bridge downtown to also go dark, said the City Council and Mayor R.T. Rybak in a joint announcement today following passage of their resolution. The only city building lights that will stay on will be those deemed "required for life, safety or operations," the announcement said. The World Wildlife Federation initiated "Earth Hour" as a global initiative "to finding solutions for climate change." It began last year in Sydney and also will be observed for the first time in Europe, North America and Asia. "If we can make a difference in one hour," Rybak said, "imagine how much good we can do for our environment if we practice energy conservation every day. (by Paul Walsh)

Living Green – Life in a Green House

The EPA recently found air quality in homes to be up to 10 times more toxic than the air outside. Some of this pollution comes from the harsh chemicals found in cleaning products. Non-toxic

cleaning products that use plant-based ingredients like soy, orange and corn, like Minneapolis-based Restore are safer for your family, and give your home a green clean! Here are a few more ways to make a greener, healthier home:

- **Dim Your Lighting (Bill)**

MN Green Fact: By switching one regular light bulb to a compact fluorescent (CFL), you'll save about \$14 annually. If every American made the switch, it would save \$8 billion in energy costs! CFLs that are Energy Star approved use 75% less energy than regular incandescents and last up to 10 times longer. Once CFLs do burn out, they must – by law – be disposed of properly because they contain mercury.

- **Be An Energy Star**

MN Green Fact: In 2006, ENERGY STAR, a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy, helped Americans save enough energy to avoid greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those from 25 million cars while saving \$14 billion on their utility bills.

- **Changing Diapers**

MN Green Fact: The Real Diaper Association recently found that 27.4 billion disposable diapers are used each year in the U.S., adding more than 3.4 million tons of waste to landfills. The average family spends \$3,000 on disposable diapers through toilet training. By comparison, parents that use cloth diapers spend less than \$300. (MPCA Living Green program)

Job Openings:

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture is hiring a Water Quality Advisor for Southeast Minnesota. This position is responsible for the planning, assessment, response strategy development, implementation and education aspects associated with nitrogen and pesticide BMPs in Southeastern MN. For more information,

<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/waterqualityadvisor.pdf>

Events:

March 27th (Thursday) is a CapX2020 open house at the Midwest Center for Wind Energy (2390 County Hwy 1), Hendricks from 10:00 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information, www.capx2020.com

March 29th (Saturday) is the **Far North Symposium** sponsored by the Minnesota Canoe Association from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Metropolitan State University in St. Paul. For more information: <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/canoeposter.pdf>

March 31st (Monday) is a CapX2020 open house at Max's Grill (1325 West Lincoln Ave.), Olivia from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. For more information, www.capx2020.com

March 31st (Monday) is a CapX2020 open house at Redwood Area Community Center (901 Cook Street), Redwood Falls from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. For more information, www.capx2020.com

April 2nd (Wednesday) is an **Environmental Education and Global Warming** presentation at MPCA office, St. Paul from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. For more information <http://mrbdc.mnsu.edu/calendar/pdfs/eeglobalwarming.pdf>

April 2nd (Wednesday) is a CapX2020 open house at Arlington Community Center (204 Shamrock Drive), Arlington from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. For more information, www.capx2020.com

April 5th (Saturday) is **Unlocking the Secrets of the Minnesota River** presentation at 10:15 a.m. at the Linneaus Arboretum, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter. For more information: <http://mrbdc.mnsu.edu/calendar/pdfs/leagueofwomenvoterspresentation.pdf>

April 5th (Saturday) is the **Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River (CCMR) annual MN River Banquet** at the New Ulm Community Center located at the corner of Highway 15 North and German Street. Doors will open at 5 p.m. with a social hour and dinner served at 6:30 p.m. For more information: <http://mrbdc.mnsu.edu/calendar/pdfs/ccmrbanquet.pdf>

April 8th (Tuesday) is the first of three **Conservation Drainage Symposiums** from 7:00 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. at the Chippewa County Courthouse Assembly Room in Montevideo. For more information, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/conservationdrainagesymposiums.pdf>

April 9th (Wednesday) is the second of three **Conservation Drainage Symposiums** from 7:00 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. at the New Ulm Holiday Inn. For more information, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/conservationdrainagesymposiums.pdf>

April 10th (Thursday) is the last of the three **Conservation Drainage Symposiums** from 7:00 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. at the Bloomington Civic Plaza in the City Council Chambers. For more information, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/conservationdrainagesymposiums.pdf>

April 13th (Sunday) is the program **Water Presentation in Natural Settings** from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Holy Spirit Retreat Center, Mankato. For more information: <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/holyspiritpresentation.pdf>

April 15th (Tuesday) is the **Minnesota River Watershed Alliance Quarterly Meeting** at the New Century Charter School in Hutchinson. A social hour begins at 6:00 p.m. with food and drink, and the regular meeting at 7:00 p.m.

April 17th (Thursday) is the “**Rain Gardens for Water Quality**” presentation at 7:00 p.m. at the Ney Nature Center outside of Henderson. For more information, <http://mrbdc.mnsu.edu/calendar/pdfs/raingardenney.pdf>

Check out additional upcoming events and workshops on the Minnesota River Calendar at: <http://mrbdc.mnsu.edu/calendar/index.html>

Water Quality Articles:

Center for Ethics director gives talk on climate change. As long-term trends show the average global temperature warming up, Dane Scott said he wants to provide helpful ways for people to think about the ethical aspects of climate change, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/centerethicsclimatechange.pdf>

Margo Thorning: Climate-change policies come with a price tag. A study projects jobs losses, lower incomes and higher basic costs. This should be part of the discussion regarding government policies set to reduce global warming, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/climatechangeoliciespricetag.pdf>

Cloth diapers are back, baby. Tina Darr believes in saving the environment one cloth diaper at a time. Well, actually two cloth diapers at a time for the mother of 13-month-old twins, one of a growing number of ecologically conscious parents, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/clothdiapersareback.pdf>

Donaldson ahead of clean-air curve. In preparation for tougher emissions standards at home and abroad, Bloomington-based Donaldson Co. has beat the competition to market with a line of small, powerful air filters designed for construction equipment, farm tractors and combines, and heavy- and medium-duty trucks, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/donaldsonaheadcleanaircurve.pdf>

Editorial: Ethanol industry needs to evolve before it expands. The ethanol equation is far more complex than we once thought. The Post-Bulletin features "What Price Ethanol?" an in-depth look at the costs and benefits of a product that has become a cornerstone of our national energy policy, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/ethanolindustryneedsto evolve.pdf>

Ethanol myths abound, but check the facts. Randall J. Doyal is CEO of Al-Corn Clean Fuel in Claremont explains myths behind the ethanol industry, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/ethanolmythsabound.pdf>

Ethanol: Power of the future? Or future disaster? Rural communities traditionally have welcomed ethanol plants as a way to boost the local economy. But questions have begun to surface about whether ethanol plants do more environmental harm than economic good, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/ethanolpositiveordisasterfuture.pdf>

Ethanol slam was based on a false assumption. MN Representative Al Juhnke says David Strom got it about his argument over ethanol, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/ethanolslamfalseassumption.pdf>

Farm Bill extended one month. Congress passed and President Bush signed a bill last week that extends the current Farm Bill until April 18. The original 2002 bill expired last September as the president warns congress to agree on an acceptable new Farm Bill, or the current one will be extended for another year, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/farmbillextendedonemonth.pdf>

This is one bill that's 'past due.' National Farmers Union president says it's time to 'get down to business' and agree on new farm bill, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/farmbillpastdue.pdf>

Gas Prices Reaching 'Tipping Point' For Consumers. Over the last two months, American gasoline consumption fell by one percent compared to what consumers pumped last year as the price of gas continues to rise, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/gaspricesreachtippingpoint.pdf>

Grass Lake restoration proposal now in Senate bonding bill. While initially getting stiffed, two Kandiyohi County projects have now been added to the Senate's version of the 2008 bonding bill including restoring Grass Lake, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/grasslakerestorationproposal.pdf>

Ground water is good water. This is one person's view of the current state of ground water and the issues surrounding this resource, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/groundwaterisgoodwater.pdf>

Growing locally, legislating nationally: Rules hinder state's specialty farmers. Consumers want more fruits and vegetables from nearby, but Congress has limited Midwest expansion in the new farm bill due to pressure by other states, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/growinglocallylegislatingnationally.pdf>

Conrad says latest farm bill proposal is unacceptable, dedicated disaster fund continues to be a sticking point. High Plains senators say a new farm bill proposal would shortchange farmers who have lost crops to bad weather. A dedicated fund designed to help those farmers continues to be a sticking point as farm-state members of Congress struggle to come up with money to pay for the legislation passed by the House and Senate last year, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/latestfarmbillproposalunacceptable.pdf>

Record Editorial: Minnesota doesn't need California's clean car standards. According to an editorial, Minnesota lawmakers should put the brakes on a proposal to adopt the California clean car standards for the state, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/mnvscaliforniaclean carstandards.pdf>

MPCA addresses septic rule changes. After Hubbard County commissioners spend months fussing about changes to the septic system rules, MPCA officials say those comments had helped shape many of the new rules,

<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/mpcaaddressessepticrulechange.pdf>

More scrutiny for Agassiz Energy LLC ethanol plant; MPCA to recommend more stringent EIS. Plans to build an ethanol plant near Erskine have suffered another setback, with the MPCA set to recommend that the project, proposed by Agassiz Energy LLC, complete a detailed Environmental Impact Statement before proceeding further,

<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/mpcamorescrutinyagassizethanolplant.pdf>

Not from Sweden any more: A new generation of immigrant farmers in Minnesota. New immigrant farmers from Laos and other non-European countries are looking to expand the market for their produce besides farmer markets,

<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/newgenerationofimmigrantfarmers.pdf>

Poet seeks farmer support for cellulosic ethanol project. Ethanol maker Poet wants Iowa farmers to hand over their corn cobs, and lots of them. Three years from now, the nation's top ethanol producer hopes to use its plant in Emmetsburg to become one of the first refiners to produce cellulosic ethanol on a large scale,

<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/poetseeksfarmersupportcellulesic.pdf>

Solutions. R.T. Rybak, Mayor of Minneapolis in Forbes talks about how we need to change the car industry in America to meet a demand for hybrid cars,

<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/rtrybakgreencar.pdf>

Saving the environment. Templeton is one of four new field organizers in greater Minnesota for the Minnesota Environmental Partnership. The statewide coalition of more than 80 nonprofit conservation and environmental organizations strengthens the effectiveness of the eco-conscious community by creating common goals in natural resources preservation,

<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/savingtheenvironment.pdf>

The trouble with road salt. Our waters are being contaminated, sometimes long after the snow has melted, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/troublewithroadsalt.pdf>

Weatherization needs on Indian reservations outstrip assistance. On the state's northern Indian reservations, many families live in homes that are poorly insulated. The cost of energy sometimes requires half a family's income. The state provides some money for weatherization, but the need is far greater than the assistance,

<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/weatherizationneedsoutstripassistance.pdf>

Wood-burning plant embroiled in politics. Wood-burning plant faces stiffer questioning about financing and politics as key deadline on land deal nears,

<http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/woodburningplantembroiledpolitics.pdf>

The marsh, to him who enters it in a receptive mood, holds, besides mosquitoes and stagnation, melody, the mystery of unknown waters, and the sweetness of Nature undisturbed by man – Charles William Beebe (1877-1962), Log of the Sun, 1906

In a mucked up lovely river, I cast my little fly.

I look at that river and smell it and it makes me wanna cry.

Oh to clean our dirty planet, now there's a noble wish,

and I'm putting my shoulder to the wheel

'cause I wanna catch some fish. – Greg Brown, "Spring Wind" from Dream Café, 1992

The Minnesota River Watershed Alliance (Watershed Alliance) is an organized network of citizens, public agencies, and private organizations dedicated to communicating the benefits of an ecology healthy Minnesota River Watershed to others and are actively working towards its improvement and protection. We meet four times a year and encourage landowners and recreational users of the river to be part of the effort. For more information on the Watershed Alliance: <http://www.watershedalliance.blogspot.com>

Thanks,

Scott

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