

West Central Telephone

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Over \$16 million in Stimulus Funds for Minnesota Renewable Energy Projects

Minnesota Senator Dan Skogen Reports at WCTA's Minnesota Solar Tour & Celebration Oct. 3

For Immediate Release

Tuesday, November 03, 2009

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Sebeka— Renewable energy enthusiasts received good news about many new funding opportunities for Minnesota wind and solar power installations from guests speaking at West Central Telephone's Solar Celebration on Saturday, October 3rd. West Central Telephone was participating in the Minnesota Solar Tour by showcasing the wind/solar hybrid backup power system being tested at their main headquarters in Sebeka as part of an *Xcel RDF grant research project. The celebration featured "sun-themed" foods; an exclusive up-close tour of the wind turbine and solar panels installed in the WCTA equipment yard; and guest speakers Dan Skogen, Minnesota Senator representing District 10, and Mark Ritter, Grant Administrator for the Xcel RDF grant program which funded the research.

Senator Skogen reported on several new funding opportunities for Minnesotans, including \$3 million for residential solar installations, \$6 million for commercial and industrial solar installations, \$4.5 million for various renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies for schools and government buildings, and \$3 million for central corridor renewable energy projects. Additional funding will soon be coming for wind installations as well. Senator Skogen stressed, however, that "for most of these programs, we have to distribute the funds within eighteen months, because they're part of the federal stimulus package, so if you've been considering installing a system, now is the time to act."

Xcel Energy RDF Grant Administrator Mark Ritter gave background information on the Renewable Development Fund, explaining its history and types of projects that are funded. "It's not only research but several other types of projects that are funded, such as the creation of a Zero Energy Building in the Science Museum of Minnesota." Mr. Ritter said WCTA's application ranked 2nd in the technology category and 8th overall in the research and development projects. "We were especially impressed with how much WCTA was able to do with relatively little funding. Compared to other projects that are maybe more abstract and can take years, this project has concrete results that can benefit us right now." He also commented on the readability and understandability of the milestone reports which are available online at the Xcel Energy RDF website.

According to Pam Mahling, Corporate Resource Specialist for WCTA, "Anybody working in the renewable energy field knows that the past year has been an especially busy and exciting time for

Minnesota. Representatives from government, education, science and technology, utilities, and a variety of small businesses from across the state have been working together to make the most of recent opportunities, as well as advances in technologies, that can position Minnesota as THE leader in renewable energy.” She cited Xcel’s Smart Grid and battery storage technology research projects as two examples of promising new technologies coming our way.

Minnesota was ranked one of the top ten “Best States for Solar” by *Home Power Magazine* (April-May 2008). In addition to its annual solar energy potential, which is actually more than Houston, Texas, Minnesota’s “incentives, regulatory policies, and demonstrated commitment to solar energy are truly impressive.”

*Project funding provided by customers of Xcel Energy through a grant from the Renewable Development Fund.

About the Minnesota Renewable Energy Society

The Minnesota Renewable Energy Society is a member-run, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in Minneapolis in 1978 to promote the use of and advocacy for renewable energies in Minnesota through education and demonstration of practical applications. The Society is involved with education, awareness, and advocacy efforts for all forms of renewable energy technologies, with a particular emphasis on solar energy technologies. For more information about MRES and the Minnesota Solar Home Tour, go to www.mnRenewables.org.

About West Central Telephone Association

West Central Telephone Association is a full service telecommunications company providing local and long distance services, advanced telephone, broadband Internet services, IPTV, business phone systems, complete telecommunications wiring services and much more.

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