



People and Nature: Our Future is in the Balance

National Wildlife Federation

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**Macalester College
St. Paul, Minnesota
Spring 2003, Energy**

BACKGROUND

Campus Profile

Macalester is a four-year private liberal arts college located in St. Paul, Minnesota. Enrollment is approximately 1800 full-time students. There are 150 full-time and 70 part-time faculty members. Macalester offers a major in Environmental Studies and is a signatory of the Talloires Declaration of the Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future.

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GOALS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Goals

Short-Term Goals

The project in many ways was a continuation of a Green Pricing campaign begun in Spring '02 by MPIRG and affiliated organizations in which the College would agree to purchase 10% of its electricity from "green" (i.e., wind) sources. The long-term goal of this was to demonstrate that the College took seriously its commitments under the Talloires Declaration to improve its environmental performance, as well as to inform and engage the student body.

Wanting to build on the awareness that campaign created, we worked with the physical plant on collaborative ways to increase the awareness of renewable energy and energy conservation in the student body. When we learned that the utility had offered to buy us a turbine, its speedy installation became the immediate goal of the campaign.

Long-Term Goals

Over the next two to three years, this should serve as a rallying point to engage a much broader community with issues such as global warming, local pollution and the realistic potential for sustainable energy production. We hope it will spur collaboration to compel more public and private institutions to invest in renewable energy and innovative design for their economic, ecological and educational merits.

Accomplishments

The goal 10% Green Power purchase has not been achieved, primarily due to financial constraints (it would cost an additional \$32,000/yr in a time of budget cuts). We did successfully install a wind turbine on our campus, but that is really only a proximate goal. It was, as stated, a

rallying point for a much broader agenda of increasing the importance placed on environmental awareness at the college, both academically and through institutional practices. I think that with the existence of the turbine, these more important and intractable problems will be more salient and new participants will work to address them.

Challenges and Responses

A Special Conditional Use Permit from the city was required, which required a bit of footwork. We got information out to the neighborhood, which essentially supported it, and generated support for the plan internally with a student government resolution. The real engineering problems were addressed by the physical plant and contracting companies, as was the initial funding. Since the machine and tower were donated, money wasn't too much of a concern. This is, however, a unique situation.

ENGAGEMENT & SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

Collaboration between student groups and college staff was central to the success of this project. Leaders from interested groups on campus met monthly and planned to see how each organization could utilize its strengths to make the project happen. So much of the logistics were handled by the physical plant that our groups had little to do except be excited, raise awareness and speak up when the time was appropriate.

Dave Bergstrom and Mark Dickinson in Physical Plant, the Campus Environmental Issues Committee, MCSG, the Senior Class Gift Committee, the Greens, MPIRG, and EA were central in this project.

Funding

All told, installation of the wind turbine cost about \$50,000: \$22,000 for the turbine, \$13,000 for the tower and \$15,000 for labor and engineering work. The first two costs were covered by the utility's money, which in turn came from the Renewable Development Fund, whereas the \$15,000 installation cost was initially covered by Physical Plant, and then repaid from funds raised for the Sr. Class Gift.

CLOSING COMMENT

Start working to get renewable energy systems visible on your campus! Now! We need to have done it 10 years ago! It might not be terribly windy or sunny where you are; your specific location will determine what you can do. Begin by monitoring and assessing renewable energy potential state energy offices or the Department of Energy are good places to start. These analyses also make great class projects. It is absolutely imperative that you have a good, solid knowledge foundation before you try to advocate for anything. Bring in speakers and consultants to help you think through these things.

After educating yourselves, look for allies and be open to collaboration, especially within the college. Among the students, there are obvious allies: environmental groups, outdoors groups, and bike clubs. Look beyond, to religious groups, techie groups, related departments. Talk to professors and get them on board. The staff engineers, carpenters, and plumbers on college campuses have intimate knowledge of the campus' performance and a sense of what can work practically. Value everyone's contribution, but formulate your objectives early and stay with them; it's easy to get sidetracked if you think too "laterally." If you've got a really great proposal, work with the development office at your school to help you tap funds. There's a lot of money out there for innovative projects like this because people across the board understand this is where we need to go. Utilize those resources. Celebrate your accomplishments and have fun while you're changing the world.