

Contact: Sarah Libbon, Communications Officer
Southwest Minnesota Foundation
320-587-4848 or 800-594-9480
Sarahl@swmnfoundation.org

COLUMN FOR RELEASE ON FEBRUARY 7, 2006

February 3, 2006

Transmission and Transportation – Keys to Renewable Energy Production

By Mark Willers, CEO Minwind Energy, LLC – Luverne, MN

Energy construction in 2006 will move rapidly into full swing with new forms of renewable energy—wind, ethanol, and biodiesel. These create the ultimate form of energy production -- revenue.

As Minnesota moves renewable energy forward, it is interesting to watch high voltage transmission line foundations being poured mid-winter in southern Minnesota! As we expand wind farms, the need for additional transmission is becoming necessary to move product (electricity) to load centers (metro areas). While we all watch these transmission lines go up, we must also appreciate that part of the revenue created by these wind farms is Minnesota-owned. Thus we create Community-Based Energy Development. The concept of Community-Based creates three needs: 1) understanding that capital must be raised for growth, 2) that good management is needed for long term success, and 3) that commitment to working together collectively is essential. All three are needed to ensure fulfillment of economic goals. In many ways, the wind farms are a second generation of NEW value-added ventures which follow in the footsteps of ethanol

plants and their ownership. Minnesotans must be aware of where dollars are in the economy and of the massive amounts of energy dollars that leave the Minnesota economy.

We also see the need for infrastructure such as railroads and highways. If we plan to continue transporting Revenue into Minnesota, these means of exporting product will need to be updated to include expanded ethanol barge traffic. Once again, we will see how dollars are spread among entities, but be sure to note that rural communities will still need short line rail to be cost effective in moving dried distillers grain and ethanol to market. The production and ownership of new energy dollars will be decided by the foundation we expand upon today.

This monthly column is brought to you by the Southwest Minnesota Foundation as part of its initiative to advance renewable energy as an economic asset in southwest Minnesota by branding and promoting the region as The Renewable Energy Marketplace™. For more information on the Renewable Energy Marketplace™, log onto www.renewableenergymarketplace.org and for more information on the Southwest Minnesota Foundation, log onto www.swmnfoundation.org.

###