

Conference aims to expand 'green' view

By Rob Swenson

Sioux Falls Business Journal

The Sioux Falls area has advantages in the global quest for sustainable prosperity, according to a national expert.

"I think there are inherent advantages in a state with robust agricultural and wind-power resources," said Alex Steffen, a Seattle-based writer, speaker and futurist. "In a broader sense, in the whole region, those are big advantages."

Steffen will give the opening keynote speech at Plain Green 11. The environmental conference will be Oct. 14 at the Orpheum Theater Center.

Plain Green promotes itself as a conference and marketplace for green design, business and ideas. The goal is to advance environmental sustainability in the Northern Plains.

"Save the whales for another green conference," declares the title page of the conference program and promotional materials.

Organizers are trying to expand participation by appealing to a greater range of representatives of businesses and other organizations.

plain green



IF YOU'RE GOING

PLAIN GREEN 11

- » **What:** Environmental conference
- » **When:** 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Oct. 14, with community-service project Oct. 12 and opening party Oct. 13
- » **Where:** Conference at Orpheum Theater Center, project on Avera McKennan campus, opening party at Museum of Visual Materials
- » **Cost:** \$30 to \$95 for full conference by Oct. 13, \$50 passes for partial attendance
- » **Registration:** plaingreen.org

"It's tended to appeal to people who were already green-minded," said Jeff Hazard of Koch Hazard Architects, one of the conference founders.

"Now we're trying to broaden the base of interest in the community," he said.

Koch Hazard, South Dakota State University and the Sioux Falls Green Project co-founded the conference, which began in 2008. The founders continue to play key roles in organizing the daylong event. Avera McKennan is the presenting sponsor.

The conference will begin at 7 a.m. with registration and a continental breakfast. It will conclude with a party after a 4 p.m. keynote by Sarah Susanka, an architect and the author of the "Not So Big House" series. Gail Vittori, an expert on greening health care, will give the lunch keynote.

Workshops will be held on topics such as corporate culture, greening health care, wind energy and sustainable materials.

A community-service project related to the conference will be Oct. 12. Participants will build a garden shelter on the Avera McKennan campus. An opening party starts at 6 p.m. Oct. 13 at the Museum of Visual Materials.

Until Oct. 13, registration costs range from \$95 for the full conference, including breakfast and lunch, to \$30 for students. Passes costing \$50 are available for part-day participation. Prices will increase on the day of the event to \$135 for the full conference and \$40 for students, organizers

said.

Steffen promotes what he calls "sustainable prosperity" and "bright green strategies" for thriving in tough times.

Great programs and consultants are available to help businesses save energy and run more efficiently, he said. But he encourages businesses to think ahead and try to provide sustainable services and products to their customers.

A potentially big economic advantage to the Sioux Falls area is the fact that food supplies are not meeting global demand, and the world's population continues to increase, Steffen said.

Areas that figure out how to farm more sustainably – "and there's no reason South Dakota can't do that" – will be positioned to prosper for years to come, he said.

And with limited oil and coal supplies, alternative energies such as wind will increase in demand during the next 20 years, Steffen said.

"There's a real opportunity there. It's an opportunity that leaves everyone who gets into it better off. There isn't really a negative side to wind energy," he said.

"Being a city that's a hub is going to be a real advantage in wind energy."

Programs work to create green jobs

By Jodi Schwan
Sioux Falls Business Journal

At a time when overall job creation is challenging, every level of government appears to be honing in on "green jobs," and training programs are being created to match future opportunities.

A federal initiative recently led to a project in South Dakota to identify and measure green jobs. The research found 3.8 percent of jobs in South Dakota are considered green, meaning the work effort results in environmental benefits.

"There are green practices and green production processes," said Bernie Moran, administrator of the state's Labor Market Information Center. "So people might recycle within their business, and there are other green practices done by some businesses, that's not perhaps a job that would actually be green."

The state's percentage of green jobs

was comparable to others in the region.

South Dakota's region, which includes five surrounding states, reported 17.3 percent of production occupations were green jobs. That encompasses a range of manufacturing positions, including those that support energy efficiency and renewable energy.

"We have a lot of manufacturing going on in the state regarding the production of the turbines and the blades," Moran said.

Fifteen percent of the region's construction jobs are considered green.

"We're seeing it becoming more and more a part of everyday design and construction," said Jeff Hazard, CEO of Koch Hazard Architects.

Koch Hazard has done 15 to 20 Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design-certified projects, though most have been for the public sector, which now routinely requires some form of LEED certification.



Jeff Hazard

all construction industry rebounds, Hazard said.

"There will be a need for more and more contractors to be up to speed on LEED processes and not just general contracting but mechanical contracting because their work has a lot to do with energy efficiency," he said.

Renewable energy technology was one targeted business area identified through

"Most every client we work with these days has some interest in LEED approaches," Hazard said. "Just trying to get buildings as energy efficient as possible because that has a direct impact on the bottom line."

Jobs will be more available in green building once the over-

ONLINE

For more about the city's efforts to update its sustainability master plan and open an education center, go to www.siouxfallsbusinessjournal.com

a planning process at the Sioux Falls Development Foundation in 2010.

"The reality is that alternative energy is on just about everyone's targeted industry list right now," said Slater Barr, the foundation's president.

"It's considered to be a growth industry. There's government interest, market reasons and environmental concerns that are driving interest."

Poet, the world's largest ethanol producer, might encourage similar economic

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development for Sioux Falls.

"And collaborations between the ethanol industry and biotechnology also are a possibility," Barr said.

Certain industries are "keenly interested" in how green a community is before deciding where to locate projects, Barr said.

"Some companies are soliciting proposals from communities, and a component is some identification of green resources and assets in the community and what alternatives are there for them to be sustainable," he said. "I think we do well for a community our size."

Input from the business community helped Kilian Community College develop its associate of applied science degree in sustainability, which will be offered this fall.

"We came up with this idea of a sustainability coordinator-type position in a company, and that's what this degree would fulfill, and businesses that already have people that would like some of this information just to take some of these classes and not the whole program," said

Janet Garcia, Kilian's academic dean.

A certificate in sustainability requires 13 credits. Courses will cover basic sustainability, resources and legal issues.

The associate degree takes two years. The program was initiated through a state labor department grant to help create green job training programs.

"What we're hoping is this degree gets someone into a position where they can assist an organization in becoming more green and develop their position as it grows," Garcia said.

Southeast Technical Institute incorporates green elements into several programs.

"I bring in as much LEED information as I can," said John Kolander, a professor of architecture and construction management.

The school also has a newly developed green building techniques class and offers green certification classes.

Student response is strong, Kolander said.

"It does interest them," he said. "LEED and green design, unlike back in the '60s when it was a different culture, today green design is mainstream."