



January 19, 2011

Mr. Jack Byrne
Director, Sustainability Integration Office, Middlebury College
Franklin Environmental Center at Hillcrest
531 Hillcrest #109
Middlebury, VT 05753

RE: Letter of Support for STARS Program

Dear Jack;

I am writing to comment on the Middlebury Energy Cooperative Project that Middlebury College has initiated in partnership with the Town of Middlebury, Vermont. The Biomass Energy Resource Center (BERC) is an independent, national nonprofit organization that serves as a center for biomass research, information, and assistance. BERC has collaborated on this unique effort and I have personally been involved as a member of the project's steering committee.

The Middlebury Energy Cooperative Project takes a unique and innovative approach to addressing the challenge of developing a local energy economy based on a local, renewable source of biomass energy.

First, it assesses the feasibility of a mini-district thermal energy model for biomass heating districts rather than a more traditional central plant model. For a historic Vermont town centralized among rural environs, Middlebury could benefit from examining the potential for creation of mini-districts that serve smaller, scattered areas of energy-intensive use instead of one large energy plant.

Second, the Middlebury Energy Cooperative Project puts considerable focus and resources into quantifying the potential production of biomass from agricultural and forest lands owned by the college, the town, and private landowners based on the ecological capacity of the land to produce biomass. In other words, the project researches optimizing biomass production while protecting and restoring ecosystem health in ways that allow greater rates of carbon sequestration in soils.

Third, this project takes a comprehensive view of the challenges surrounding the implementation of a locally supplied biomass district heating system by assessing: biomass fuel supply, various types of biomass heating systems appropriate for different-sized users, the opportunities and constraints of forming a biomass purchasing cooperative, and the development of a community renewable energy fund to help initiate the implementation phase of the effort.

It also worth mentioning that this project is unique by virtue of its partnership between the college, its host town, and numerous other community participants, as well.

There are four other local biomass projects in various stages of feasibility assessment or early implementation in Vermont and several others in the country. The Middlebury project and its innovative approach will provide valuable insight and knowledge to help these other projects as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AS', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Adam Sherman
Interim Executive Director