

Making Business *a Force for Environmental Good*

For a green and growing Capital Region

BY JOHN IMES

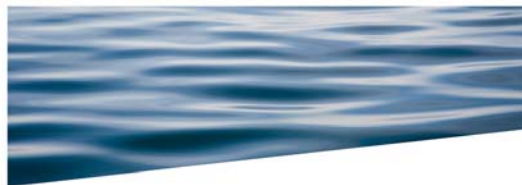
When it comes to meeting environmental requirements, “business as usual” today unfortunately still relies on a complex web of compliance, costly litigation and the minimum standards of “command-and-control.”

Wisconsin’s innovative Green Tier law provides a better way for businesses to make positive environmental improvements while reducing costs and achieving real business success. Green Tier participants assess their performance, implement greener strategies and, in turn, receive flexibility, recognition and other incentives.

With major issues confronting the state and region, such as developing energy independence, addressing global warming, protecting natural resources, and ways we might move toward more sustainable development, there are growing numbers of business leaders and others committed to making a positive environmental impact while inspiring others:

In 1995, Quad/Graphics, the state’s largest printer, voluntarily committed to reduce its electricity use (or energy intensity) by three percent per year per unit of output on an ongoing basis. Since then, the company has implemented impressive and comprehensive energy-efficiency initiatives to reduce electricity use by more than 35 percent per unit of output.

Similarly, Johnson Controls set a target of reducing its U.S. greenhouse gas



emissions intensity by 18 percent per dollar of sales between 2002 and 2012, but the company was progressing so quickly toward meeting that goal that it has now set a new target of a 30-percent drop in emissions per dollar of sales. Miller Brewing Company set a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 18 percent per barrel of production from

2001 to 2006.

Imagine if most businesses, or even entire sectors, were to embrace robust energy efficiency to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while growing the state’s economy. A recent summit with Wisconsin industrial leaders from major energy-intensive clusters including paper, printing, food processing, foundry and



plastics, together with representatives from federal and state agencies and other stakeholders, are working to determine how we might meet or exceed energy reduction goals each year over the next 10 years. It's estimated that even a two-percent reduction in Wisconsin industrial electricity use would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by over 400,000 metric tons each year. And by combining reduced energy use with new sources of clean energy to replace the projected two- to three-percent growth in sector energy demand each year, we would dramatically reduce emissions while continuing to add new jobs, growth and investment.

The new Capitol Area Regional Planning Commission plans to protect Dane County's farmland and groundwater from poorly planned development is another opportunity to apply forward-thinking Green Tier strategies and improve environmental performance beyond current standards. Instead of another tired debate over "economic growth" versus "environmental protection," a better way might require "green development" that uses low-impact design, green building practices and zero-runoff strategies for any development to be located outside the urban service areas. And under Green Tier, projects like these might receive incentives such as fast-track permitting, one-stop regulatory approval and lower fees.

With Green Tier, we have the potential to achieve greater environmental good because the region's businesses, developers, communities and citizens can finally join together, set shared environmental performance goals and apply new technologies, practices and mindset that yield both economic and environmental benefit.

And for those who still prefer "business as usual," we have a system for you — the same old burdensome, inflexible, time-consuming and costly requirements of regulatory "command and control."

Wisconsin's Green Tier provides another opportunity to showcase the state and Capital Region as an innovator, one that can help set us apart from other states and regions.

We should seize on that opportunity, build on our legacy of environmental leadership and turn businesses, developers and communities into profitable stewards of Wisconsin's air, water and land resources.

For more on Green Tier, please visit www.greentier.wi.gov. ■



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