



SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE

To: Bemidji State University President, Dr. Faith Hensrud

From: Environmental Advisory Committee

Regarding: Offsetting Electricity Consumption Through Renewable Energy Credits

Date: July 28, 2021

President Hensrud,

Over the past several months, the EAC has actively explored an exciting opportunity to engage with a newly designed Renewable Energy Credit (REC) program through Otter Tail Power. We are writing to formally recommend BSU conclude its current participation in Otter Tail's [Tailwinds](#)* program and leverage our committed financial resources in a more cost effective way through participation in the [Midwest-Renewable Energy Tracking System \(M-RETS\)](#)* coordinated by Otter Tail Power.

Following a student senate initiative in 2005, BSU began purchasing \$9,600 of wind power credits annually to approximately cover the electricity consumption of the Student Union. As signatories of the President's Climate Commitment, we have set an ambitious goal of reaching carbon neutrality by 2050. This wind power purchase has been one way that we have demonstrated this commitment and taken steps towards this goal. As of fiscal year 2019, participation in the Tailwinds program offset **approximately 2.3% of our annual total carbon footprint**.

Though consultation with Roger Garton of Otter Tail Power, we have learned the Tailwinds program was designed for residential customers as a green power purchasing option and utilizes two specific wind turbines that were built when wind power was much more expensive than it is today. Roger has been working with Otter Tail Power over the course of this past year to make a new partnership program available, designed specifically for large commercial customers like BSU, interested in participating in the current (and much lower cost) renewable electricity market.

Participation in this new program would allow us to achieve significantly more carbon reduction benefit at a much lower cost. If we were to shift the current financial resources we have long committed to the TailWinds program annually (\$9,600) into this new M-RETS program, we would achieve a total annual carbon reduction of **almost 56% at no additional cost**. That is 56% carbon reduction in M-RETS for \$9,600, compared to our current 2.3% carbon reduction in Tailwinds for \$9,600.



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Therefore, it is the recommendation of the EAC that BSU **spend no less money** on annual carbon offsets than previously dedicated yet take advantage of this new partnership program and use those dollars more cost-effectively to further incentivize clean energy development and climate action in our Region.

Sincerely,

Jordan Lutz, Anna Carlson, and Bonita O'Neal
Co-Conveners, Environmental Advisory Committee

*Additional content available at:

Tailwinds Program <https://www.otpco.com/ways-to-save/renewable-energy-residential/tailwinds-wind-energy/>

Midwest-Renewable Energy Tracking System (M-RETS) <https://www.mrets.org/about/why-use-m-rets/>