

Perspectives

NESEA's BuildingEnergy10 a Boston Fixture

The Northeast Sustainable Energy Association's (NESEA's) 35th annual conference, which was in Boston, Massachusetts (USA), brought together a diverse mix of real world contractors and cutting edge practitioners from across practical green building energy techniques. Total attendance at the two-day event was about 4,100 people.

BATE sat down with Jennifer Marrapese, the new Executive Director of NESEA, to get her insights into the organization and the goal of BE10. As Marrapese said, "[NESEA's] mission is to advance sustainable energy practices in the built environment." She added, "What's different about [the] NESEA [conference] is that it provides both commitment and unvarnished data on the part of the presenters. Participants can learn both from the presenters' successes and failures, and can execute what they learned on their own projects."

The Conference Planning Committee seeks proposals from member practitioners, and also evaluates outside proposals, before speakers are selected. This year, a new "co-presenter" approach paired a senior-level practitioner with a younger NESEA member. To qualify for consideration, case studies must present a minimum of one year's worth of actual data — modeled behavior is not sufficient.

A Look Forward

NESEA strives to continuously improve the conference. As Marrapese explained, "Discover how we can do better, tighten it up, where we can make the experience even more valuable for attendees — it's a learning culture, that's why we've been on the vanguard of sustainability." NESEA's strategy of bringing together the next generation of leaders with seasoned practitioners in the field as workshop

the eastern United States. The intent of BuildingEnergy10 (BE10) was to present case studies showcasing best practices for implementing energy-efficient solutions, and to highlight cutting-edge and next-generation thinking, renewable technologies, and presenters allows them to be "groomed" for sliding into leadership roles within the industry. Today, NESEA continues to be a growing, thriving organization.

Topics under consideration for future conferences include ideas like energy site security (and even the security of our food supply) as part of integrated solutions. For example, some members have recommended presentations that link energy efficiency and renewable energy more closely with national security — to demonstrate that there are compelling reasons beyond climate change to lessen dependence on fossil fuels.

Marrapese also explained that NESEA does not promote one standard over another; instead, the conferences are designed to be an open forum showcasing proven examples of best practices. Marrapese added, "Workshops and presentations can feature examples of applications depicting ZeroNet, LEED, or even Passive House, which began in Massachusetts in the 1970s — the beauty of Passive House is that the design requires no energy."

BATE: How does the NESEA conference compare to other similar-themed conferences, such as Greenbuild, or the long-running Build Boston?

Marrapese: "NESEA's approach is more of a holistic one which views the building as a complete system, and provides insight into a cross-section of professions — it's the only conference that appeals to builders, engineers, organizers, educators, and suppliers of renewable energy. From a historical standpoint, NESEA was

the first player to launch this type of conference, and over time, the others followed suit.”

Conference Highlights

The opening plenary session featured Sam Baldwin, Chief Technology Officer for renewable energy at the US Department of Energy. In his talk, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy for a Clean Energy Future, he said the United States is making substantial advances in building technologies and systems as a means to provide comfortable, efficient, beautiful spaces where people can live and work. These high-performance buildings have important linkages across every part of the economy, from industry to transportation to electricity and fuels.

But there are also challenges that relate to the economy, security, and the environment. Baldwin said the challenges can be met head-on with the twin tools of energy efficiency (EE) and renewable energy (RE). Specifically, he pointed to energy efficiency opportunities in buildings, industry, and transportation, as well as opportunities with renewable fuels and electricity.

Baldwin listed the following challenges: increase the fuel economy of 2 billion cars from 30 to 60 miles per gallon; cut carbon emissions from buildings by one-fourth by 2050; double coal power output by improving efficiency from 32% today to 60%; introduce carbon capture and storage (CCS) at 800 gigawatts of coal-fired power plants; install 1 million 2-megawatt wind turbines; and install 3,000 gigawatts-peak of

solar power. Options for using EE and RE to meet the challenges include extending the availability of fossil fuels/CCS and nuclear power; increasing efficiency in buildings, industry, and transportation; capitalizing on opportunities for renewable energy and energy storage in biomass, geothermal, hydropower, ocean energy, solar photovoltaic, thermal, natural gas, and wind energy; and improving transmission infrastructure.

Rob Sargent, Environment America, focused on climate change legislation and how that could impact the northeastern United States. In his view, state and local governments are leading the charge to implement measures that will reduce carbon emissions. These entities are also raising the bar and developing models for successful action to save energy and shift to clean renewable energy. (For more, see *America on the Move: State Leadership in the Fight against Global Warming and What it Means for the World* at www.environmentamerica.org/home/reports/report-archives/global-warming-solutions/.) State energy/climate policies are projected to yield carbon dioxide emission reductions of more than 500 million metric tons by 2020. Approximately 25% of those reductions will come from the northeastern United States. State regulatory policies include emission caps (state and regional), renewable energy and energy efficiency resource standards, clean cars programs, and changes in building codes.

About NESEA

The Northeast Sustainable Energy Association is a leading regional advocacy and membership organization dedicated

to promoting sustainable energy practices. NESEA has supported and inspired a growing network of professionals and sustainable energy experts who have been committed to responsible energy use for 35 years. NESEA communicates information about a wide array of sustainable solutions; provides detailed project case studies with proven results and verifiable metrics; and, in promoting transparency, offers access to cutting-edge technologies and creative approaches. Its membership comes from the 10 northeastern US states. NESEA's Building Energy conference is the oldest

and largest regional building energy and renewable energy conference and trade show for practitioners in the northeast. ■

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