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NESEA sets the stage for BuildingEnergy09 conference

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As the country faces record high gas prices, rising energy costs, and Congress deliberates the extension of a series of tax credits for renewable energy through H.R 6049 "The Renewable Energy and Job Creation Act of 2008," there's a call to action for information and solutions on how to address our growing energy needs and the ever-worsening climate crisis in a way that's both environmentally responsible, yet economically feasible.

That's why this year's annual conference of the North East Sustainable Energy Association (NESEA), BuildingEnergy09 (to be held March 10-12, 2009 at the Seaport Hotel in Boston), will focus on educating attendees about the myriad aspects of developing a multi-pronged infrastructure - technological, regulatory, and financial - that can cut across industries, sectors, and communities to support scalable solutions to the climate crisis, while generating new jobs, promoting national security, and improving public health.

Sound ambitious? It is. But in a way, there's little else to discuss. NESEA, a member organization based in Greenfield, Mass., with 14 chapters in states throughout the northeast, has held an annual conference for the past 34 years, and it's always been at the forefront of the movement to curtail our ubiquitous use and catastrophic waste of fossil fuels. Now more than ever, all of the transformative work that NESEA members have been doing for the past three and a half decades needs to be understood through the context of mitigating the climate crisis through the development of a new, secure, renewable economy. Now is the time for widespread action.

Many remember the embargo of the early 1970s and the palpable sense of urgency there was to reduce America's dependence on foreign oil through the use of energy efficiency and renewable energy. President Carter went so far as to put forth the idea that the adoption of energy efficiency and conservation carried with it the "moral equivalency of war." But soon enough oil prices dropped, the sense of urgency that had gripped the American public subsided. This time we can't afford to let the current moment, with such momentum for change and potential for positive transformation pass us by, as we did before.

Now, as the federal government waits for a new President who will address the climate crisis and an increasing demand for energy, the private sector as well as state and local governments across the nation are ramping up efforts to develop the sort of sweeping infrastructure needed to effectuate the rapid deployment of energy efficiency technologies, renewable energy generation, and healthier "green" products that will help solve our economic and environmental problems simultaneously.

It's easy to see why. While most of the housing markets in the country are reeling from the subprime debacle, green commercial and residential developments continue to attract buyers and tenants. Building owners and homeowners in the northeast, especially those who heat with oil, are looking everywhere for ways to cut consumption and costs. States and cities throughout the region are instituting renewable portfolio standards, and instituting plans for their electric grids that call for

negative load growth through a reduction in per capita demand. Venture capitalists and private equity funds from Silicon Valley to Spain are pouring money into the development of renewable utilities. And the northeast will soon hold the first auctions as part of its groundbreaking Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. NESEA's BuildingEnergy09 Conference will put all these initiatives in perspective and help identify what else can be done and how.

Whether you're an energy professional seeking detailed technical information about solar installations or air-sealing strategies, a banker wanting to learn about sustainable investment opportunities, a government employee trying to implement sound and realistic energy policy, or a community activist trying to rally a town around carbon reduction goals, this year's NESEA Conference will offer you an opportunity to learn about the best solutions from the best minds in the country.

Save the dates March 10-12, 2009 so that you can attend BuildingEnergy09. I look forward to seeing you at the conference.

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