

Storm Warnings: Best Practices provides timely information, trends and ideas that relate to the looming storm and impact on our lives.

# BEST PRACTICES

“Practical solutions for challenging times”

Issue 2, 2015

Research, Leadership and Partnerships

**Best Practices Award:** *Weathering the Storm* periodically recognizes organizations that provide practical, effective and quantifiable solutions for addressing the complex challenges associated with the perfect storm in our pathway.

It is a privilege to present our latest “*Best Practices Award*” to the University of Minnesota’s “**Institute on the Environment**” (IonE) for its effective leadership in addressing many of the great energy and environmental challenges of our time. As a facilitator, catalyst and leveraging agent, the Institute on the Environment has brought together a diverse array of experts and thought leaders from the public and private sectors to develop solutions for these complex, systemic challenges. The results to date have been most impressive.

## INSTITUTE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

**Driven to Discover**<sup>SM</sup>

**Mission:** The Institute on the Environment’s mission is to discover solutions to Earth’s most pressing environmental problems by conducting transformative research, developing the next generation of global leaders and building world-changing partnerships.

**Organization:** Complex environmental challenges can’t be solved with business-as-usual

thinking. Addressing these problems demands new, transformative research to help us better understand Earth's systems in a changing global environment. But it also requires new leadership and ways of working together.

Launched in 2008, the University of Minnesota Institute on the Environment (IonE) is discovering solutions to Earth's most pressing environmental challenges through research, education and engagement with key partners.

We create a synergistic environment for addressing issues that transcend any single discipline, program or institution by bringing together thought leaders from private and public sectors and the University. We catalyze innovative activities aimed at creating technically, socially and economically sound solutions. IonE is an incubator for new ideas, projects, technologies and businesses.

*DISCOVERING SOLUTIONS:* IonE pursues research-based solutions to the biggest challenges of the 21st century in a number of key areas such as energy, food and land use, freshwater, urban resilience, and whole systems. Through our fellows and research programs, we bring together the brightest minds from across the University of Minnesota and beyond. Established experts team with emerging leaders in science, technology, business, education, policy and other areas to envision and create enduring positive change around the world.

*PREPARING LEADERS:* IonE's leadership programs are shaping the next generation of environmental leaders. We offer a range of specialized training in communication, media relations, entrepreneurship, systems thinking and more. While our efforts tend to focus on graduate, professional and postdoctoral students, we also serve the larger University community by coordinating the undergraduate sustainability studies minor, supporting emerging graduate sustainability programs and providing communications and leadership training for faculty and staff.

*ENGAGING PARTNERS:* Partnership is at the heart of nearly all of IonE's activities. By linking our work with that of leaders in the business, investment, government, media and nonprofit sectors, we're building synergies and creating conduits for exporting Minnesota innovation around the world while growing new opportunities at home.

**Track record:** Over the past eight years the Institute on the Environment has worked to accelerate environmental solutions. Through research and engagement we have had an influence on global food security, renewable energy in Minnesota, the valuation and protection of critical ecosystems, preserving clean waterways and much more. We've launched over 50 projects focused on regional and global environmental challenges, established hundreds of partnerships across a range of sectors, trained close to 1,000 future environmental leaders and engaged millions of people globally through our publications and media outreach.

A few examples of the Institute on Environment's research and partnership initiatives are as follows:

- The Natural Capital Project develops software and integrates the value of nature into major decisions affecting humans and the environment. This partnership includes The Nature Conservancy, The World Wildlife Fund, and the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment.
- The Global Landscapes Initiative utilizes strategic partnerships and big data to understand and identify key trends, challenges, and solutions in global land use, food production, and environmental impact.
- The Northstar Initiative for Sustainable Enterprise works with the private sector to understand the environmental impacts of businesses and how to reduce those impacts and add value across the supply chain.

**Ways to Engage:** The Institute on the Environment actively seeks new partners and collaborators focused on advancing environmental solutions. Here are a few ways to get involved:

- Based on your particular area of interest, contact one of our program leads listed here: <http://environment.umn.edu/contact-us/directory/>
- Attend one of our weekly Frontiers in the Environment events to hear the latest from the IonE community and our partners: <http://environment.umn.edu/frontiers-in-the-environment/>
- Contact our Director of Partnerships and Development to discuss ways to connect with the institute: <http://environment.umn.edu/contact-us/directory/jan-gerstenberger/>

**Weathering the Storm Commentary:** The University of Minnesota's Institute on the Environment is a game-changing organization that has made and is making a global difference on multiple energy and environmental fronts. Its size, scope, reputation and research capabilities uniquely position it to engage in complex, system-wide environmental challenges. As a "big picture" intermediary, its ability to leverage its efforts with others to develop sustainable solutions has been most noteworthy.

And so, it is with great pride that we recognize and salute you, the **Institute on the Environment**, for a job well done.

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Note: In the spirit of full disclosure, the founder and publisher of Weathering the Storm LLC, R. Michael Conley, is a proud graduate of the University of Minnesota and an enthusiastic supporter of the Institute on the Environment. For more information, please contact our website at: [www.WeatheringtheStorm.net](http://www.WeatheringtheStorm.net)

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