

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



## Best Practices: Minnesota Sustainable Growth Coalition

In past *Best Practices* pieces, we have focused on organizations with proven track records and years (if not decades) of experience in addressing and tackling the challenges of *the perfect storm*. However, an initiative launched this year holds such promise that we thought it prudent to highlight this organization for what it could offer in the coming years and decades as we grapple with diminishing natural resources, the threat of climate change, and dealing with an increase of pollution entering our waste sinks.

The Minnesota Sustainable Growth Coalition is comprised of more than 25 businesses and organizations dedicated to advancing sustainability via the *circular economy*. While not a new concept, the notion of the circular economy has become particularly attractive not only as a way to minimize the impact that economic activity has on the environment, but because in many cases it makes good business sense as well.

In a June 2016 press release, the Coalition's introduction of the circular economy is as follows:

“A circular economy is an economic system that values and preserves all types of capital – financial, natural, manufactured, human, or social. In this system, nothing is lost or wasted, and all resources are utilized to their highest potential. The end result is an economy that decouples economic growth from the consumption of finite natural resources.”

The circular economy is also characterized by the increased efficiency of processes and a reliance on renewable energy, and is sometimes referred to as “Zero Waste” It has its roots in systems thinking, and many different schools of thought, including ecological economics and The Natural Step ([thenaturalstep.org](http://thenaturalstep.org)).

Working towards a circular economy is just the sustainable prescription the doctor ordered. The importance of this shift in thinking cannot be overstated. The first step to solving any problem is admitting that a problem exists, so to see such a vast array of businesses and organizations willing to engage in the circular economy is a sea change for economic development.

Members include: 3M, Andersen Corporation, Aveda, Best Buy, Cargill, Center for Energy and Environment, Dow Water, Ecolab, Ever-Green Energy, Fredrikson & Byron P.A., General Mills, Greater MSP, Great Plains Institute, Great River Energy, HealthPartners, Hormel Foods, Institute on the Environment – University of Minnesota, Medtronic, Metropolitan Airports Commission, Metropolitan Council, Pentair, Target, Tennant Company, Tunheim, Uponor, Wenck, and Xcel Energy. A keen eye will notice that some past Best Practices honorees are on the list.

We will be keeping our eye on any new developments and announcements from the Coalition as they begin their work in earnest. These are truly exciting times, and we look forward to watching the Minnesota Sustainable Growth Coalition in the coming years and updating you on their progress.

- Matt Hoiland

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