



**For Immediate Release**

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**"Green" Electricity is Colby's Latest Environmental Initiative**

A commitment to purchase only electricity generated from renewable, more environmentally-friendly sources and all coming from within Maine is the latest environmental initiative on the Colby College campus, and it's one that already has had a stimulating effect on the market for "green" power choices, experts say.

It takes approximately 14 million kilowatt hours per year to power Colby's electrical needs on its Waterville campus. But, beginning in October, no fossil fuels are being burned to generate the electrical power that Colby purchases. Half is coming from Maine hydropower and the other half from Maine biomass wood waste such as wood chips and sawdust.

"Green" power is just the latest initiative in a campaign at the college to use environmentally-friendly energy sources. In the same month that the power contract was signed, three geothermal wells were drilled to provide all of the heating and cooling needs for a new 27,000-square-foot alumni center to be built on campus beginning next spring. And since 1999 Colby's own steam plant has provided approximately 12 percent of the college's annual electricity through co-generation, an innovative system in which steam for heating buildings spins a turbine to produce kilowatts on its way through the system. It produces an average of 1,700,000 kilowatt hours of electricity annually saving Colby more than \$150,000 in power purchases each year.

Colby's commitment to renewable sources of electricity was made possible by Constellation NewEnergy, working through the not-for-profit energy-purchasing consortium Maine PowerOptions, to provide the power produced by Maine generators and businesses.

"An important part was that Colby was actively seeking these commitments and thereby helping to make the market even before suppliers had surfaced," said

Tom Tietenberg, Colby's Mitchell Family Professor of Economics and an international expert on environmental economics, emissions and climate change. "Colby's role is really very important in making sure that other institutions now have green power choices."

Robert Lenna, of Maine Power Options, affirmed Colby's role. "It was the interest and encouragement expressed by Colby and other members that was instrumental in Maine PowerOptions developing and offering the Maine Renewable Product Option," he said.

Previously, 30 percent of Colby's purchased energy came from hydropower and 70 percent from burning coal. With the Constellation NewEnergy package, nitrogen oxide emissions, which cause smog, will be reduced 41 percent and sulfur dioxide emissions, which cause acid rain, will be reduced 98 percent. Hydropower produces no carbon dioxide emissions, which cause global warming, and biomass is considered CO2 neutral because CO2 released during biomass combustion is equal to the CO2 absorbed by plants during their growth cycle, and plants produce CO2 whether they are burned or allowed to rot on the forest floor.

The alumni center, which will use three geothermal wells for heating and cooling, each 1,500 feet deep, has a long list of environmentally-friendly features and was the first academic building in Maine proposed for certification through the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program. A social sciences and interdisciplinary studies building being designed for construction a year or two after the alumni center also is proposed to be a LEEDs certified green building.

This fall Colby became a Green Power Partner with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for its commitment to cleaner, renewable and reliable alternatives to conventional electricity generation. In May Colby became a partner with Clean Air-Cool Planet, an environmental group working directly with corporations, communities and campuses to develop and implement voluntary greenhouse gas emission reduction efforts. The college is a supporting organization of Maine Green Power Connection, a network of businesses, organizations and residents working to create a viable market for greener electric power in Maine. In September 2002 Colby was awarded a Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence for a campus-wide effort to adopt environmentally-friendly practices.

