

# NORTH DAKOTA ATHLETES SNOWKITE ACROSS STATE TO PROMOTE WIND ENERGY

Contributed by The Editors  
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Minneapolis, MINN. – Jan. 22, 2008 – Environmental activism meets extreme athleticism on the windy Great Plains. To promote the wind energy potential of North Dakota, Northern Great Plains Inc., YogaSlackers and Mortenson Construction announce the 2008 To Cross the Moon Expedition (2XtM). In 21 days, 3 extreme athletes will snowkite more than 390 miles across North Dakota's moon-like landscape. The expedition kicks off at the Canadian border near Crosby, N.D. on Feb. 11 and ends with community celebrations in Fargo and Grand Forks Feb. 29 – March 3.

The expedition will be completely self-supported with three athletes hauling all food, equipment and supplies needed to survive the extreme weather conditions where temperatures can reach 40 degrees below zero and wind-chills as low as 100 degrees below zero.

"It will be an extreme challenge," says expedition leader Sam Salwei, "but our goal is to make North Dakota the 'state of extremes' by demonstrating the state's wind energy potential in a tangible way."

North Dakota has been called the "Saudi Arabia of Wind." The U.S. Department of Energy ranks North Dakota the number one state in wind energy potential. Theoretically speaking, North Dakota alone is capable of producing enough wind-generated power to meet more than one-fourth of the U.S. electricity demand, according to the DOE estimates.

But despite this potential, North Dakota fell from 13th place in wind energy production in 2004 to 15th place in 2007. Currently, the state only has 344 megawatts of power online, which correlates to only 3/10ths of 1 percent of its potential.

"The U.S. is blessed with a vast wind resource that is just waiting to be tapped," said Randall Swisher, Executive Director of the American Wind Energy Association. "North Dakota could rapidly become a hub of wind power generation, powering a cleaner, stronger America."

The environmental benefits of wind-generated electricity are increasingly recognized by those who favor "green" power because there are no harmful emissions or climate changing byproducts.

One of the 2XtM's sponsors, Mortenson Construction, is the leading wind power contractor in North America.

"We are committed to environmental stewardship," said Mortenson's president & CEO, Tom Gunkel. "We reflect that commitment by partnering with organizations who share that same interest, many of whom are directly responsible for bringing new renewable energy projects to life."

In addition to the environmental advantages, the development of large-scale wind installations in North Dakota would create new industry and bring new jobs to the state. Landowners and local communities would experience a positive economic impact as well.

"Currently, only a small portion of the wind being developed in North Dakota has local ownership," said Melissa Peterson, Program Associate for the community wind advocacy group Windustry. "By teaming up with 2XtM and raising public awareness of the tremendous local benefits of community wind energy, we hope to turn this trend around."

"Landowners benefit through leasing of wind rights and schools benefit from increased tax revenues," said 2XtM's education coordinator Jason Schaefer. "It's a win-win all around and we need to show that to the world."

Accompanying the athletes on the traverse, the 2XtM community outreach crew will roughly follow the expedition route and give educational presentations to increase awareness of wind energy and climate change in local schools and at community forums. The crew will also hold free snowkiting demonstration clinics where participants will be able to "hold the wind in their hands." For a complete list of educational presentations and free demo clinics visit [2XtM.com](http://2XtM.com).

Although 2XtM's main goal is to raise awareness for the potential of wind power in North Dakota. The athletes — Sam Salwei and Jason Magness, both from Grand Forks, N.D. along with Paul Cassedy from San Diego, Calif. — also hope to bring positive national attention to North Dakota's assets, including its wide open spaces and opportunities for recreation.

"The trek across North Dakota that Sam and Jason have put together is an example of the exciting recreational opportunities our state offers," said U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan. "But even more importantly, it's bringing attention to an important issue – the development of our wind energy resource."

More information can be found at [www.2XtM.com](http://www.2XtM.com). When the expedition commences, the website will provide gps tracking of the athletes' progress as well as educational resources including a feature called, "ask an expert," where visitors can submit questions to experts in the fields of snowkiting, wind energy and climate change.

About Northern Great Plains, Inc.

Northern Great Plains Inc. is a not-for-profit research, demonstration and convening organization. NGP Inc. focuses its work on futures study, creating economic opportunity, and supporting a healthy environment and vital communities.

About YogaSlackers

Team YogaSlackers are a small group of elite ultra-endurance adventurers, master yoga teachers, and environmental activists. Through adventure racing, yoga instruction, slacklining (tight-rope walking), remote climbing, packrafting and snowkiting expeditions, team members strive to live by the principles of environmental sustainability. Team YogaSlackers is committed to eco-conscious education, renewable energy promotion, and partnering only with companies who truly share the ideals of positive global change.

About Mortenson Construction

Founded in 1954, Mortenson Construction is a U.S.-based, family-owned construction company. As one of the nation's top builders, Mortenson provides a complete range of services, including planning, program management, preconstruction, general contracting, construction management, design-build, and turn-key development. Mortenson has offices in Chicago, Denver, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Phoenix, and Seattle with international operations in Canada and China. Engineering News-Record ranked Mortenson 38 in the 2007 Top 400 Contractors listing and recently named the company the 17th Top Green Contractor. For more information, please visit [mortenson.com](http://mortenson.com).