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Group to bike for greening of America

Danny Valentine - The Daily Iowan

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Riding bicycles equipped with solar panels, UI professors, students, former Hawkeyes, and concerned citizens will pedal through five states in support of using renewable resources.

From Sept. 21 to 28, students across Iowa, along with other sustainability-minded groups, will traverse 1,270 miles to promote the benefits of alternative power and to tour green buildings.

"The Midwest is really full of energy resources," said Teresa Galluzzo, a research assistant for the Iowa Policy Project, the group sponsoring the ride. "We want to draw attention to global warming and to the fact that there are [alternative] energy solutions on the ground working."

Now in its second tour around the Midwest, the 2006 Green Bike Tour, which was founded by UI Clinical Associate Professor David Osterberg in 1999, has traveled as far as Europe. This year's tour will be the group's fifth, overall.

The bikers will stop in 16 cities, including Waterloo, Sioux City, and Ames. The final destination in the group's five-state loop is Iowa City - just in time for the national Engineers for a Sustainable World conference.

At the stops, the group will meet with local sustainability organizations, politicians, and people using alternative energy. The members will also tour biodiesel factories, wind farms, green buildings, and ethanol plants.

"These solutions can be an economic boom," Galluzzo said. "It's time to stop relying on dirty coal and to focus on energy sources that will benefit communities."

On the ride from Cedar Falls to Waterloo, approximately 20 people will join former UI Student Government President Mark Kresowik - now a regional conservation organizer for the Sierra Club - to raise awareness about the renewable- energy cause.

A strong visual image is the key, Kresowik said. The sight of bicyclists will not only promote use of bicycle power but will also show people that alternative energy sources are available, he said.

"It is real. It is now. And it is capable of replacing our traditional forms of energy," he said, adding that he will ride an Xtracycle - a normal bicycle with an extended cargo area on the back, which he described as the "sport utility of bikes."

Nathaniel Baer, a Public Interest Research Group advocate, added that his goal for the ride is to promote clean energy.

"A lot of people are seeing Iowa as being a leader in creating transit fuel from renewable sources," he said.

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