

# Will Steger says global warming is real threat

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GILFILLAN, Minn. -- Arctic explorer Will Steger told a Farmfest audience that global warming is real, but farmers can be part of the solution.

Ethanol and biofuels are part of the solution, Steger said, but cellulosic ethanol is where the nation needs to move. A carbon negative fuel is the ultimate goal. Ethanol today is like the bag phones of the past, he said.

The solutions for global warming are not only good for the planet, but also for the economy and national security, Steger said. It's important the nation become more self-reliant in energy production.

Steger said the challenge in renewable energy production is going to be ownership. Private ownership is important to local economies.

Most wind turbines are owned by foreign companies, said Mark Willers, CEO of Minwind Energy of Luverne.

Willers said everyone is going to be involved in renewable energy production whether they want to or not. There are six new power lines proposed to be built across Minnesota, the first major transmission construction project since the 1970s.

Agriculture has a fantastic opportunity to improve the climate, said Loni Kemp, senior policy analyst with the Minnesota Project, a panelist who shared the stage with Steger.

Farmers can be more energy efficient by using no till or grazing, she said. They can also provide ethanol or biodiesel to the nation, using corn, soybeans or cellulosic feedstocks. They also have the opportunity to capture carbon in the soil and sell carbon credits.

Steger has seen big changes in the Arctic over the past 15 years. Ice shelves are melting and collapsing. Animals are facing extinction because their habitat is melting. It's changing the way of life for the native peoples, who say they will adapt, but they question Steger whether his people can adapt.

Julie Widmer, who farms by New Prague, asked Steger if Americans are doing enough.

Steger said car mileage standards need to improve to 80 to 100 miles per gallon and that things must be done smarter with better quality.

Kemp said conservation must be part of the solution.

After the panel, Widmer said she agreed with Kemp.

She said conservation must be paired with a focus on renewable energy. Everyone has a role to play, and it extends beyond tossing a pop can into the recycling bin.

Americans need to simplify their lives, Widmer said. It's the small things that matter, from driving a smaller vehicle slower to installing insulation and buying from local farmers' markets.