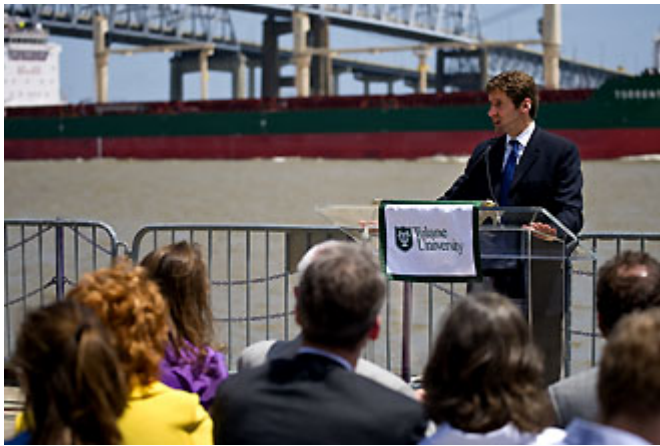


## **\$3 Million Grant Funds River Energy Project**

April 14, 2010 10:15 AM Keith Brannon

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The U.S. Economic Development Administration has awarded Tulane University a \$3 million grant to help build RiverSphere, a Center of Excellence at Tulane that will promote the development, testing, demonstration and commercialization of renewable energy technology using one of New Orleans' greatest natural resources ? the Mississippi River.



Douglas Meffert, RiverSphere executive director, speaks at a news conference on Tuesday (April 13) about the potential for harnessing the power of the Mississippi River to produce renewable energy. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celantano)

RiverSphere will be a research center, an education facility, an exhibition space and a business incubator focused on water sustainability and renewable energy. The facility, located at the Robin Street Wharf in downtown New Orleans, will include floating barges on which private companies can test prototypes of power turbines capable of generating electricity using river currents.

"The Obama administration is committed to creating jobs, encouraging innovation and improving our nation's economic competitiveness," said John R. Fernandez, U.S. assistant secretary of commerce for economic development. "This EDA investment

will work to ensure the long-term resiliency of the greater New Orleans area by supporting Tulane University's efforts to grow and commercialize innovation in the alternative energy sector."

The [grant](#), which is funded through supplemental disaster appropriations from hurricanes Katrina and Rita, will be used to convert a 22,000-square-foot warehouse next to Blaine Kern's Mardi Gras World into the RiverSphere campus.

"RiverSphere will focus initially on 'in-stream' hydrokinetic technologies that harness the power of the Mississippi River to generate carbon-free electricity," said Douglas Meffert, RiverSphere executive director and deputy director for policy at the [Tulane/Xavier Center for Bioenvironmental Research](#). "RiverSphere will be a place to explore the most cost-effective and environmentally safe energy solutions for New Orleans, Southeast Louisiana and similar geographies around the world."

The RiverSphere hydrokinetic turbine testing facility will be the nation's first "vendor-neutral" in-stream demonstration site, meaning that it will be open for use by multiple companies.

[RiverSphere](#) also will house laboratories for river-related research and exhibition.