



Biofuels Center of NC Invests in Feedstock, Glycerin Projects for Western NC

January 16, 2013

OXFORD, N.C.—As a chief component of its 2012-2013 grants award process targeting biofuels development in the western part of the state, the Biofuels Center of North Carolina will award \$766,256 to a consortium of partners led by AdvantageWest Economic Development Group to fortify the biofuels sector and trigger its expansion in the region. The project, “Planting the Seeds for a Robust WNC Biofuels Sector,” will be collaboratively executed by AdvantageWest and 13 other entities, including: N.C. State University Mountain Horticultural Crops Research and Extension Center, Catawba and Transylvania counties, Appalachian State University Energy Center, Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Bent Creek Institute, Biltmore Estate, Blue Ridge Biofuels, Land-of-Sky Regional Council, Renewable Developers, Mountain Research Station, and communities and organizations brought together by a unique multiparty partnership.

The project partners will invest a 50-percent matching contribution of \$383,128, for a total project investment of \$1,149,384. The project also dovetails well with ongoing Biofuels Center-supported projects from previous grant cycles, including feedstock efficiency projects, woody biomass-to-biofuels feasibility analyses, and the Field to Fryer to Fuel (F3) initiative.

The partnership project will measurably increase biofuels production and use in western North Carolina through four central goals: (1) expand feedstock reliability, including oil crops, spent brewery grains, and woody biomass; (2) improve value-chain economics through coproduct opportunities, including harnessing nutraceutical fractionations and waste glycerin; (3) expand demand through the establishment of a new biofuels-testing laboratory and development of outreach tools; and (4) ensure regional coordination from a new strategic western North Carolina biofuels coordinator, and investigate a multi-tenant biofuels and bioproducts industrial park.

The 2012-2013 grants program—*Strengthening Feedstocks, Production, and Products in Western North Carolina*—is supported by funds from the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Clean Air Settlement that were directed to the Center by the North Carolina General Assembly in the 2012 legislative session. Awards were determined through a competitive, peer-review process. Expert panels comprised of industry, nonprofits, and state agency representatives reviewed applications and made funding recommendations for approval by the Biofuels Center Executive Committee.

Western North Carolina holds boundless potential for biofuels and bioproducts commercialization, said Biofuels Center president and CEO Steven Burke. “The value of this

concerted effort cannot be overstated,” he said. “This will further position the state to grow jobs, secure its energy future, and enhance our environment. Moreover, that the collaborators will invest nearly \$400,000 in this project demonstrates the region’s firm commitment to developing new sectors and new economies.”

Through this year’s grant cycle—all of which will directly impact western North Carolina—awards will also be made to North Carolina State University, Caldwell Green Commission, and Mars Hill College:

- \$130,593 (North Carolina State University) · *Woody Biomass In-Field Drying Techniques for Thermochemical Conversion*; This project will investigate in-field drying techniques in western North Carolina to improve woody biomass delivery systems.
- \$102,000 (Caldwell Green Commission) · *Crude Glycerin Refining and Purification*; This project will produce higher-value, technical-grade glycerin from crude glycerine derived during biodiesel production.
- \$43,750 (Mars Hill College) · *Modeling Site Suitability for Biofuels Production in Western North Carolina*; This project will develop a spatial model of site suitability for biofuels production.
- \$28,000 (North Carolina State University) · *Availability of Woody Biomass for Biofuels in Western North Carolina*; This project will assess availability of soft hardwoods for potential facility locations in western North Carolina.

The Center received 21 pre-proposals totaling \$2,290,750 from 11 institutions following its September 2012 Request for Proposals (RFP). A total of 15 proposals entered the peer-review process, totaling \$2,372,436 in requests from eight institutions.

Strengthening and funding capabilities statewide for biofuels production is a prime task of the Biofuels Center, a private nonprofit corporation funded by the North Carolina General Assembly to develop large capacity for biofuels statewide in coming years. The Center, located on North Carolina’s Biofuels Campus in Oxford, implements sustained state policy, assists companies and all parties within the biofuels community, and works to meet North Carolina’s goal: by 2017, 10 percent of the state’s liquid transportation fuels will come from biofuels grown and produced within the state.

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