

Grant of \$766,256 Coming to WNC for Clean Energy Project

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Biggest award in granting entity's history will measurably advance the biofuels industry in WNC

Officials with AdvantageWest and the Biofuels Center of North Carolina have announced today a consortium of Western North Carolina partners will receive a grant of \$766,256 from the Biofuels Center, which will measurably advance the biofuels industry in the region. It is the largest single award ever granted in the Center's history. Partners in the project will make a 50 percent match of \$383,128 in in-kind services and financial contributions for a total investment of \$1,149,384.

According to AdvantageWest, the regional economic development organization that is leading the project, "Planting the Seeds for a Robust WNC Biofuels Sector" is expected to result in increased biofuels production and utilization to as much as 5.2 million gallons per year by 2017. The project outcomes will create jobs while supporting sustainability in WNC and build on regional strengths of entrepreneurship, agribusiness, and diverse education, research and development capabilities.

Among the public and private partners in the consortium with AdvantageWest are Appalachian State University Energy Center, Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, Bent Creek Institute, Catawba County, Land-of-Sky Regional Council, Mountain Research Station, N.C. Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, N.C. State University Mountain Horticultural Crops Research and Extension Center, Transylvania County and WNC Communities.

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."

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 co-product 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.

“We are very excited about this project,” said Woodrow Eaton of Blue Ridge Biofuels in Asheville. “It is an opportunity to improve our region's energy security and air quality while simultaneously building a new agricultural sector to help support our region's farmers.”

“AdvantageWest and our project partners believe that the business case for North Carolina-grown biofuels production and utilization will lay the foundation for long-term industry growth in Western North Carolina, expanding our region’s hub of clean energy industries,” said Tom Alexander, chairman of the AdvantageWest board of directors. “Today is a great day for this region.”

North Carolina’s Strategic Plan for Biofuels Leadership, developed by the state legislature in 2007, calls for 10 percent of the state’s imported oil to be replaced with local biofuels by 2017. The Biofuels Center of North Carolina was established to achieve the state’s strategic goals and is the nation's only agency working comprehensively over time for all aspects of biofuels development. The Center’s 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.