



NEWS RELEASE



USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry
180 Canfield St, Morgantown WV 26505

Phone: 304-285-1503; Fax: 304-285-1505; Web Site: <http://www.na.fs.fed.us/>

Date:	June 9, 2008		Release No. MFO-18-08
Contact:	Steve Milauskas	phone (304) 487-1510	E-mail: smilauskas@fs.fed.us
	Joseph James	phone (803) 462-0153	E-mail: jsephjames@bellsouth.net
	Devin Wanner	phone (304) 285-1596	E-mail: dwanner@fs.fed.us

Agri-Tech Producers, LLC, Awarded Grant by U.S. Forest Service

PRINCETON, WVa— Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry Director Kathryn Maloney announced the awarding more than \$1.5 million in grants to 23 competitively selected projects. The grants from the U.S. Forest Service encourage innovation and the sharing of processing and marketing knowledge with wood products manufacturers in the Eastern United States. The primary goal of the grants is to keep local wood businesses globally competitive and sustainable.

Agri-Tech Producers, LLC, of Columbia, S.C., received a \$100,000 grant to demonstrate the benefits of pretreating woody biomass in the forest with heat (torrefaction). Pretreating increases the density of wood and its efficiency as a biofuel, enhances its storage life, and reduces or eliminates further processing needed for utility companies to use woody biomass with coal for energy production.

When announcing the selected grants Maloney said, "A vibrant forest products industry is vital to sustaining healthy hardwood forests. These grants will assist American-based forest products industries remain competitive in the global market place. The projects selected this year address a diverse spectrum of industry needs including economic competitiveness, woody biomass utilization, urban wood utilization and invasive species control, and education."

Through the grant program, WERC develops partnerships with state forestry agencies, universities, the forest industry, and others to advance workforce skills and resource management opportunities. The funds awarded by WERC are leveraged with partner contributions to initiate projects. The 23 projects selected this year provide matching funds in excess of \$1.9 million.

Selections were based on a number of factors, including consideration of whether the project or grant recipient could:

MORE

- Maintain the economic competitiveness of hardwood industries.
- Bring information and technology to existing and emerging businesses that develop and manufacture wood products.
- Bring marketing and business-related skills to existing and emerging wood products businesses.
- Encourage the adoption of new technology to improve competitiveness and profitability.
- Provide support and key information to entrepreneurs and start-up businesses.
- Address global issues and assist communities and industries facing threats from invasive species, such as the emerald ash borer.
- Increase the use of woody biomass for domestic energy use.

Funding is provided through the U.S. Forest Service Wood Education and Resource Center, located in Princeton, WV., and administered by the agency's Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry organization. The Center works with the forest products industry toward sustainable forest products production for the eastern hardwood forest region. It provides state-of-the-art training, technology transfer, networking opportunities, applied research, and information. For more information, visit <http://www.na.fs.fed.us/werc/>.

###