



NEWS RELEASE

While federal grants support western biomass energy, Congress sends mixed message on renewable energy

For Immediate Release

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DENVER, April 8, 2008 – The announcement of \$4.1 million in grants to small rural businesses in the west highlights the need for increased investments and community involvement in finding solutions to western forest health issues.

While the grants address the funding need, political challenges abound. Congress recently passed an energy bill that would eliminate woody biomass from projects such as these from being ‘counted’ towards our Nation’s renewable fuels standard. “We should not be closing down options when it comes to woody biomass utilization,” said Bill Crapser, Chair of the Council and Wyoming State Forester. “Policies such as this dampen private sector enthusiasm to invest in winning solutions to fire, forest health and climate problems.” If the types of materials used towards the increased renewable fuels standard goals are artificially limited, a disincentive for investment is created.

The grants are intended to help create markets for small-diameter material and low-valued trees removed from forest restoration activities, such as reducing hazardous fuels, handling insect and diseased conditions, or treating forestlands impacted by catastrophic weather. The broader object of the grant program is to help create sustainable, healthy and resilient forests that will survive an environment of natural disturbances and threats including climate change.

According to the report, *A Strategic Assessment of Forest Biomass and Fuel Reduction Treatments in Western States**, in the west there are at least 28 million acres of forest that could benefit from reducing hazardous fuels. Implementation of any significant effort would generate large volumes of biomass and require the development of additional workforce and operations capacity in western forests.

The Forest Service's State and Private Forestry, Technology Marketing Unit, at the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin will administer the grant program. For a list of grantees visit www.fs.fed.us

* USFS Forest Service, Research and Development
April 2003, http://www.wflccenter.org/news_pdf/25_pdf.pdf

The Council of Western State Foresters represents the State and Island Forestry Agencies in the seventeen states and six Island territories of the western US. These agencies’ services include wildfire and forest health protection. For more in formation please visit www.westernstateforesters.org