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Morris campus receives Next Generation Energy Grant

Summary: Governor Tim Pawlenty announced \$2.7 million in Next Generation Energy Grants, aimed at accelerating the development of renewable energy projects and advanced biofuels in Minnesota. Among the eight awardees is a partnership between the College of Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resource Sciences and the University of Minnesota, Morris, which received \$50,000 to study the economics of businesses that store and supply biomass to energy facilities such as the one on the Morris campus.

(November 7, 2008)-Governor Tim Pawlenty announced \$2.7 million in Next Generation Energy Grants, aimed at accelerating the development of renewable energy projects and advanced biofuels in Minnesota. Among the eight awardees is a partnership between the University's College of Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS) and the University of Minnesota, Morris, which received \$50,000 to study the economics of businesses that store and supply biomass to energy facilities such as the one on the Morris campus.

The governor made the announcement November 6 during a visit to the University's St. Paul campus.

"Emerging technologies are dramatically changing the way we produce and use energy," Governor Pawlenty said. "These grants are part of our broader effort to Americanize and improve our energy sources and position Minnesota for economic growth."

"This grant will allow us to better understand how businesses could be set up that would have the equipment and staff to assist facilities like the Morris campus with the daily handling of biomass," said Joel Tallaksen, biomass gasification coordinator.

The Morris campus dedicated its new biomass facility October 3. A model community-based energy system, the facility will use about 9,000 tons of biomass per year to offset roughly 80 percent of UMM's fossil fuel usage. Energy sources like corn stover and prairie grasses will be purchased from area farmers and producers, injecting hundreds of thousands of dollars into the regional economy, creating new employment opportunities, a "green collar" economy and an exciting future for west central Minnesota. The facility will move the campus one step closer to being energy self-sufficient and carbon neutral by 2010.

The Next Generation Energy Board was established by Governor Pawlenty as part of the Next Generation Energy Act of 2007. The board develops next generation energy and biofuels policy and makes recommendations to the governor and Legislature about how the state can invest its resources to most efficiently achieve energy independence, agricultural and natural resources sustainability, and rural economic vitality.

A total of 28 proposals were submitted to a technical review committee comprised of staff from the Departments of Agriculture, Natural Resources, Commerce, Employment and Economic Development and the Pollution Control Agency. After ranking the projects, eight were selected for funding.

Included among the other awardees is the University's CFANS Forestry Department, which received \$100,000 to study the sustainability of the state's forests as a source of woody biomass for energy.

Photo by Matt Zaske, WCROC: Biomass burning

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.