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New Study Finds Wisconsin Schools can Save Energy Costs with Biomass Heating

- Study funded by Focus on Energy identifies opportunity for schools to save money by using renewable resource -

EAU CLAIRE, Wis. (February 26, 2008) – On Feb. 26, 2008, Rod Nilsestuen, Secretary of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, announced the completion of a study funded by Focus on Energy called “*Heating with Biomass: A Feasibility Study of Wisconsin Schools Heated with Wood.*” During his visit at De Long Middle School in Eau Claire, Wis., the secretary explained to area students that an estimated 200 to 300 of Wisconsin schools could save hundreds of thousands of dollars in energy costs by switching from natural gas to heating their buildings with wood, or other biomass. This is a significant finding considering Wisconsin schools spend close to \$200 million a year on energy costs.

"Biomass is part of a portfolio for Wisconsin's energy independence," said Secretary Nilsestuen. "The school wood study illustrates that Wisconsin has both the renewable resources and innovation needed to reach Governor Doyle's goal of 25 percent renewable energy and fuel by 2025."

The study was funded by Focus on Energy, Wisconsin's energy efficiency and renewable energy initiative. It was conducted by P Squared Group, a Madison, Wis., based environmental consulting group, and the Biomass Energy Resources Center (BERC) of Montpelier, Vt. The study evaluates the current cost of space heating in Wisconsin schools compared to the costs of using biomass resources to supply heat. Biomass, a renewable resource, typically consists of clean wood chips, wood or agricultural based pellets.

“Approximately 300, of the 1,300 Wisconsin schools studied, could switch to locally available biomass resources economically,” said Don Wichert, director for Focus on Energy’s renewable energy program. “If certain school districts were to switch to biomass space heating, they could save fossil fuels and money all while supporting the local economy.”

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In fact, the study found that annual energy costs from wood biomass systems could be 29 percent to 57 percent less expensive than natural gas and save schools between \$53,000 and \$75,000 annually, depending on current fuel prices. The study includes case studies from Barron, Hayward, Shell Lake and Rice Lake high schools.

“There is clearly potential for many more Wisconsin school districts, specifically in the northern and southwest portions of the state, to adopt biomass technology in the near future as a cost effective and environmentally responsible solution to increasing energy costs,” said Wichert. “Modern biomass heating systems are clean burning and use wood from the more than 30 million acres of forests and farmlands — Wisconsin’s largest natural resource.”

Focus on Energy is invested in identifying and working with schools that are interested in biomass. To adopt biomass technology, schools can work with Focus on Energy’s Renewable Energy Program and gain:

- A free pre-feasibility study
- Informational and technical assistance
- Financial assistance, including cost sharing detailed feasibility studies grants up to \$10,000 and Implementation Grants up to \$250,000

To learn more about biomass for your school, download the study from focusonenergy.com/biomassforschools or call (800) 762-7077 and mention the “*Heating with Biomass: A Feasibility Study of Wisconsin Schools Heated with Wood*” study.

About the Focus on Energy Renewable Energy Program

Focus on Energy works with eligible Wisconsin residents and businesses to install cost effective energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Focus on Energy's Renewable Energy Program seeks to raise awareness, provide training and financing, enhance marketing, promote technical assistance and support the installation of renewable energy technologies across Wisconsin. For more information call (800) 762-7077 or visit focusonenergy.com.

About Focus on Energy

Focus on Energy works with eligible Wisconsin residents and businesses to install cost effective energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Focus information, resources and financial incentives help to implement projects that otherwise would not get completed, or to complete projects sooner than scheduled. Its efforts help Wisconsin residents and businesses manage rising energy costs, promote in-state economic development, protect our environment and control the state's growing demand for electricity and natural gas. For more information call (800) 762-7077 or visit focusonenergy.com.