

NEWS RELEASE

June 2, 2011

Grant Funds to Provide Assistance to Regional Forest Businesses

\$220,000 grant, through a partnership between BREDD and Forest Business Network LLC, will provide technical assistance to sawmills, loggers, and other forest-related businesses.

(June 2, 2011) MISSOULA, Mont. – BitterRoot Economic Development District, Inc (www.bredd.org) today announced the launch of a program to provide technical assistance to regional forest businesses, through a partnership with Forest Business Network LLC (FBN). Through grant funds awarded by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, FBN will provide technical support and expertise to regional sawmills, logging companies and other forest-related businesses. Services will include business and financial planning, marketing and management assistance, and assistance with technical feasibility studies. Additionally, FBN will work toward development of additional renewable energy biomass businesses and partnerships. Grant funds will also allow FBN to continue to develop their centralized, vast and easily accessible online sources for forest business-related information and resources at www.forestbusinessnetwork.com and through Forest Business Network's weekly email newsletter.

Technical assistance will help forest businesses who have been investing in innovative technologies to expand their production capacity into green market places and branch into renewable energy production as a means to both conserve energy and produce renewable energy. Building a regional biomass energy production business plan at existing mill sites will support green economic efforts and help mills compete globally.

"This grant allows us to provide hands-on assistance in order to help businesses succeed, in the face of a changing marketplace," said Craig Rawlings, President & CEO of the Forest Business Network.

Regional forest businesses will have access to a variety of services, and will benefit from the expertise at FBN. Rawlings, widely considered one of the country's foremost authorities on underutilized timber and biomass, is already at the forefront of the effort to determine the feasibility of biomass energy at Montana sawmills, and has been working to develop those businesses for nearly a decade. With similar assistance in the past, businesses have been able to qualify for a variety of grants, including the Forest Service's Woody Biomass Utilization Program.

In response to changes in the economic climate, leaders in the Bitterroot Region have recognized the need to diversify the economy and are actively pursuing regional strategies to do so, including diversification of forest businesses. "This project will add to regional economic development strategies by creating more economically diverse communities," said Marcy Allen, Executive Director of BREDD.

“We’re excited to partner with FBN on this project, as they’re so well suited to provide this expertise to biomass business partnerships,” said Allen. “This will also be a great service to regional companies who are looking for ways to diversify their forestry businesses.”

For more information on this project, visit www.bredd.org or www.forestbusinessnetwork.com , or contact Craig Rawlings at craig@forestbusinessnetwork.com.

The Forest Business Technical Assistance Project is one of five project funded by the EDA grant, which was awarded to BREDD in 2010, providing funds to implement a trade adjustment strategy to increase competitiveness in the global marketplace, creating economic growth and increased employment opportunities throughout the region.

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MEDIA CONTACTS:

Marcy Allen
BitterRoot Economic Development District, Inc
Phone: (406) 258-3423
Email: mallen@bredd.org
Website: www.bredd.org

Craig Rawlings
Forest Business Network
Phone: (406) 240-0300
Email: craig@forestbusinessnetwork.com
Website: www.forestbusinessnetwork.com

Additional Contacts:

In addition to the formal media contacts above, here is contact info for regional forest business leaders who have worked with Craig Rawlings, and are familiar with and supportive of this project:

1. Pyramid Lumber: Loren Rose, Controller. 406- 677-2201 ext 26 or lorenr@pyramidlumber.com
2. Eagle Stud Mill: Paul Toussaint, Manager. 406-549-6148 or ptoussaint@blackfoot.net