

January 23, 2009

Funding spurs eco-friendly innovation in forestry and ag sectors

Edmonton... New jobs and business opportunities in rural and aboriginal communities are the aim of \$10-million in funding for the development of environmentally friendly products and processes in the province's renewable resource sectors.

Three research projects under industry, academia and government partnerships will be funded over three years through this contribution from the national Community Development Trust (CDT) fund. Each project targets developing new value-added opportunities for the forestry and agriculture sectors. Funding will be administered by Alberta Advanced Education and Technology through the Alberta Forestry Research Institute.

"In these difficult times, we are allocating a portion of Alberta's CDT funds to diversify our cornerstone resource sectors. Investing in our can-do community spirit and powerhouse research expertise on exciting bioeconomy opportunities could lead to big results," said Doug Horner, Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. "Bio-innovations will add to Alberta's economic diversification portfolio. Alberta has a growing reputation for turning great ideas into new jobs here and technologies valued around the world."

The projects are located mainly in the communities of Drayton Valley, St. Albert and Fairview-Peace River. In Drayton Valley, \$4.5 million will go to developing ways of turning forestry and agricultural fibre into bio-geotextiles, sound-proof construction materials, and eco-friendly car and furniture parts. This fibremat initiative may lead to establishment of a unique product development centre.

\$3.6 million will establish a Centre for Excellence on Fast-growing Tree Plantations north of St Albert with satellite sites near several other communities in central Alberta. The funds will also demonstrate how fast-growing willow and poplar plantations fertilized with industrial wastewater and sludge could become an excellent source of feedstock for making transportation fuels like ethanol.

In Peace River-Fairview, the Boreal Reclamation Program of the NAIT Boreal Centre will receive \$1.8 million to develop new methods of reclaiming well sites and other industrial sites to a fully forested state. Aboriginal communities will participate in the project. The centre will also deliver information on these best practices through the Alberta Forest Extension Network.

The Government of Canada created the \$1-billion Trust to help provinces and territories assist communities and workers facing economic hardship caused by the current volatility in global financial and commodities markets. Alberta's allocation of the CDT is \$104 million.

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Attachment: Backgrounder with project details

Media inquiries may be directed to:

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Project details

Drayton Valley — R&D at Fibremat Centre (\$4.5 million in Community Development Trust funding)
Funds will be used to research how Alberta's forests (aspen, spruce, pine, fir) and agricultural fibres (flax and hemp) can be used in the BioIndustry sector to manufacture products such as car interiors; furniture parts; geotextiles for erosion control and land recovery; and insulation for walls, floors, and roofs, and ceiling tiles with superior sound insulation properties. This research is part of a larger project which aims to set up a product development, prototyping and testing facility in Drayton Valley for field-testing and manufacturing these products. This centre may position Alberta as a North American leader in engineered mat technology. Plant equipment assembly will start in spring 2009. Partners include the Town of Drayton Valley, Weyerhaeuser, and TTS Technologies.

St. Albert — Best practices for fast-growing tree plantations (\$3.6 million in Community Development Trust funding)

Funds will be used to establish a Centre for Excellence to show best practices developed at several demonstration plantations of fast-growing poplar, aspen, and willow. These plantations may be harvested in three to 20 years for use in the bioproducts sector, especially in the area of bioenergy.

Demonstration plantations are being considered for non-forested and agricultural lands near St. Albert, Camrose, Whitecourt, Beaverlodge, Peace River and Athabasca. The funds will also support research on how wastewater and sludge can be used to irrigate and fertilize the plantations. Collaborators include Town of Whitecourt, Alberta Newsprint Company, Millar Western Forest Industries, Daishowa-Marubeni, City of Edmonton, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Alberta Advanced Education and Technology via Alberta Forestry Research Institute, Canadian Wood Fibre Centre, Camrose County, Barrhead County, Poplar Council of Canada, Canadian Biomass Innovation Network, University of Alberta, and Canadian Forest Service.

Peace River-Fairview — R&D in Boreal Reclamation Program and the Alberta Forest Extension Network (\$1.8 million in Community Development Trust funding)

Funds will be used to research how to reclaim land used in well sites and other industrial activities. The research will assist industry to meet new Alberta regulations that require the establishment of two layers of native plant species. This draws on the expertise of the NAIT Boreal Forest Research Centre and will include using native boreal seeds, field trials, research partnerships with NAIT and universities, and best practices manuals. Aboriginal communities will participate in the seed delivery system with an eye to broader reclamation opportunities. Funds will also be used to expand the Alberta Forest Extension Network, managed by the NAIT Boreal Centre in Peace River. The goal is to disseminate new knowledge to managers, contractors and operators in industry and government through tours, online materials, and seminars. Partners include Shell, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Alberta Advanced Education and Technology via Alberta Forestry Research Institute, the Boreal Centre-novaNAIT, Daishowa Peace River Pulp Division, Woodland Cree First Nation, FPInnovations, and Woodland Operator Learning Foundation.

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