NRBP Monthly Report
April 9, 2001

New Jersey Farm Bureau Plans Meetings on Ethanol Plant

Two meetings are planned in April to discus the potential for ethanol production in New Jersey. According to the New Jersey Farm Bureau the meetings will be very important to New Jersey producers interested in ethanol production. The Farm Bureau is promoting the belief that ethanol production from corn (dry mill technology) is mature, and that the ethanol market is strong. Meanwhile the poultry industry is questioning if the production of ethanol will impact the availability of corn for feed. A spokesperson for BBI, a consultant hired by the Farm Bureau, believes that ethanol production can co-exist with feed production in the region. According to a previous study conducted for the Farm Bureau, New Jersey producers organized in a cooperative could receive an increase of 39 cents per bushel of corn due to an ethanol plant.

Massachusetts Renewable Trust Fund Seeking Applications

The Massachusetts Technology Park Corporation (MTPC), as administrator of the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust Fund (The Trust), is seeking applications from organizations that are interested in developing grid-connected electric generating facilities (one (1) MW or greater) in New England that employ renewable energy technologies. Projects must be intended to provide power to Massachusetts' consumers - this solicitation is not for generating facilities where the output is intended for use on-site. In addition, funding is available only for predevelopment activities, not construction costs. Private companies, not-for-profit organizations, and all public agencies are eligible to apply for funding. MTPC will provide up to $150,000 for each selected project on a cost-shared basis. A total of $500,000 is available for project funding under this solicitation. Applications will be accepted beginning on April 17, 2001. Thereafter, applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. The solicitation will remain open until funds are fully allocated. For details on the program contact the MTPC web site: http://www.mtpc.org/massrenew/solicitations/green_power.htm

Pennsylvania to Host First RBEP Agriculture Ethanol Workshop

A new RBEP sponsored ethanol workshop series, dedicated to agribusiness, will debut in Pennsylvania August 28, 2001. The workshop, although held in Pennsylvania, will have a regional focus including representatives from agribusiness in several NRBP states. The planning committee is comprised of the NRBP, Philadelphia RO, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension, and several key producer organizations such as the Farm Bureau, Farmers Union, Grange, and American Agri-Women. The workshop series is being coordinated for the RBEPs by the Western Regional Biomass Energy Program and EPAC. Originally there was to be a single workshop however, because of overwhelming support by the producer organizations two workshops will be held, one in Western Pennsylvania and another in Southeastern part of the state. The goal of the workshops is to provide information on ethanol markets and opportunities for ethanol production. The workshop will conclude with sessions on how to build supportive infrastructure for producers that wish to move forward with ethanol production.

Maryland Agencies to Buy Green Power

Stating that "state government has a responsibility to maximize our resources and minimize the impact on our environment," Maryland Governor Parris Glendening issued an executive order calling for at least 6% of the electricity consumed by state-owned facilities to be generated from "green" energy sources, such as wind, solar, landfill gas, and other biomass resources. The order specifies that no more than 50% of the power procured to meet the requirement come from municipal solid waste facilities. There are no penalties for agencies that do not comply.

The order also calls for a reduction in energy use in state buildings of 10% per square foot by 2005 and 15% by 2010, and requires all new energy-using products to carry the "Energy Star" label or "be in the top 25% of energy-efficiency when labeled products are unavailable."

NRBP and PFI to Collaborate on Pellet Heating Demonstration

The Northeast may have dodged a bullet with heating oil this winter but the NRBP is taking no chances in the future. The Northeast consumes 75% of the nation's fuel oil for heating, over 4.3 billion gallons. Over 7,000,000 homes in the NRBP region heat with fuel oil, which represents nearly 40% of all households. The NRBP and the Pellet Fuels Institute would like to offer an alternative to oil heating. Existing pellet fuel manufacturing capacity on the eastern seaboard of the United States and Canada stand at over 400,000 tons per year. The industry is postured to respond to the need to displace a portion of our distillate fuel use. Thermal space heating with biomass pellet fuels has been gaining significant popularity because of competitive price, extensive distribution network and existing appliance technology. The use of pellet fuel, a form of renewable biomass, is growing more rapidly in the Northeast than any other region in the country. Promotion and establishment of bulk delivery in the Northeast will lower overall cost, and is likely to encourage other potential users of biomass pellet fuel.

There are more than 500,000 pellet stoves and 4,000 pellet furnaces in use in the United States. Presently, homeowners buy pellet fuels in 40 lb. plastic bags. For most space heating appliances, that translates into about 24 hours of heat per bag. The bags are hauled from the retail establishment by the consumer, stored until needed, and carried to the stove or furnace for dumping into a feed hopper. Unlike consumers of gas or oil, pellet users need to physically transport fuel from a retailer, and personally insure the timely delivery of the fuel to the combustion unit.

The objective of the demonstration project is to design and field test a system for the efficient and cost-effective delivery of bulk pellet fuels to homes heated by pellet stoves, pellet-fired burners and furnaces. The difficulty of fuel handling and the lack of a well-developed bulk fuel delivery infrastructure are two of the main contributing factors to the relatively small number of homes in the United States in which pellet fuels are used for space heating. While reliable thermostatically controlled pellet stoves and furnaces are now available, the lack of an integrated fuel delivery, storage, and furnace feed system has hampered the growth of the biomass fuel industry. Existing, off-the-shelf equipment will be evaluated, and a system designed to load bulk pellets from a manufacturer's facility into a truck specially adapted to deliver a measured weight of solid fuel

into a suitable residential storage bin for automatic feed into a space-heating appliance.

NRBP Brief Congressional Subcommittee on Biomass opportunities

The Vermont biomass program and the NRBP were invited by the USDA Forest Service to participate in a briefing on the subject of wood products and wood energy possibilities from low-valued forest biomass such as that currently classified as hazardous fuels in the West and/or underutilized species in the East and West. The briefing was requested by the Forest and Forest Health Subcommittee of the House Resources Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives. The Forest Service, as part of its response, believes that wood chip and district heating concepts, such as those being pioneered in Vermont, would be a very valuable component to providing a complete briefing on something that is currently working successfully. To that end, Forest Service requested a representative on the Vermont Department of Public Service and the NRBP participate to briefly describe that technology and give examples of how it is being used in Vermont. The NRBP was joined by Dr. Tom Hamilton, Director of the Forest Products Laboratory, and John Sebelius of the USDA Forest Service, Resource Valuation and Use Research Group.

NRBP and Connecticut Agencies Discuss Biomass Working Group

The NRBP and the biomass program manager from the DOE Boston Regional Office met with representatives of three Connecticut State Agencies; Agriculture, Office of Policy and Management, and Environmental Protection. The purpose of the meeting was to promote the formation of a biomass working group in the State of Connecticut. All the agencies agreed that a working group was a good idea and pledged to work with the NRBP to get one established. The NRBP also plans to meet with the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund to explain the benefits of establishing a biomass working group and solicit their support.

NRBP Lists Funding Opportunities

The NRBP has been scanning Federal, state and private funding sources for available funding for bioenergy related projects. The NRBP is seeking funding sources for: feasibility studies, technology demonstrations, and project financing. The NRBP will place information on potential funding sources on its web site *www.nrbp.org*. The NRBP has added several recent announcements to its web site. The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority has announced a program to promote the development and demonstration of distributed generation systems, components, and related power system technologies; and combined heat and power applications, in industrial municipal, institutional, and residential settings. NYSERDA plans to award $10,000,000 in multiple cost-shared contracts.

USDA has announced available funds through USDA Rural Development - Value-added Agricultural Product Market Development Grant Program, and USDA Forest Service - National Fire Plan Proposal, grants to reduce fuel loads, utilize small diameter trees, and stewardship.