Grant supports tribes' economic and employment efforts through biomass power generation

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WASHINGTON – Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs David W. Anderson today announced that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has awarded $196,735 to the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation in Oregon for a due diligence study for the Warm Springs Biomass Demonstration Project, an effort by the tribes to enhance an existing biomass electrical generating plant located on the reservation. The project is expected to lessen potential wildfires on the tribes' lands by reducing wood waste and other fuels, as well as create new jobs and economic development opportunities for the tribes as a biomass power provider.

"I am very pleased to announce our support for the Warm Springs Tribes' effort to develop a reservation-based biomass electrical generating plant," Anderson said. "Not only will such a power plant create new jobs for the Warm Springs people, but their project will be a beacon for other forest resource tribes who are seeking solutions to their forestry fuels management and economic development needs."

According to a U.S. Department of Energy 1999 National Renewable Energy Laboratory report, an average of 4.9 jobs are created for every megawatt of biomass energy produced. The enhanced Warm Springs plant is expected to produce 15 megawatts (MW) of renewable energy that will create 75 living wage jobs while preserving another 135 existing jobs at the tribes' mill. In addition, the plant will use wood waste that could potentially fuel catastrophic wildfires, provide electricity to local utilities and state and federal governments and serve as a demonstration project for other forest resource tribes.

The Warm Springs Biomass Demonstration Project Due Diligence Study is needed to assure potential lenders and guarantors that the project will have an adequate forest resource base to rely on, a secured market for electricity produced and that appropriate financial pieces are in place. The study is scheduled to be completed next April.

In addition to helping the Warm Springs Tribes reach their economic and job development goals, the Warm Springs Demonstration Project also exemplifies several Interior Department and BIA initiatives, such as:

- IMPROVING FOREST HEALTH AND REDUCING FOREST FUELS by removing wood waste and other fuels and thinning dense stands of trees and undergrowth to significantly reduce the risk that national and tribal forests face from catastrophic wildfire, and to create healthier, more fire-resilient landscapes.
- SUPPORTING RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT by utilizing biomass created from fuels reduction activities in tribal forests for the production of renewable power.
- CREATING JOBS by enhancing the tribes' existing plant to generate 15 MW of power that will

create 75 living wage jobs while preserving 135 existing jobs at the tribal mill.
- IMPROVING AIR QUALITY by reducing the need for land management agencies and landowners to use the practice of openly burning forest fuels, which adds smoke, particulates and other pollutants to the atmosphere.
- SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATION AND DEPARTMENTAL DIRECTIVES by providing a market in central Oregon for biomass material that will be created as a result of the implementation of President Bush’s Healthy Forests Initiative, Secretary Gale Norton’s Renewable Energy Plan, the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, the Tribal Forest Protection Act, and Interior interagency agreements dealing with biomass utilization and fuel treatments.

The Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs has responsibility for fulfilling the Interior Department's trust responsibilities and promoting self-determination through economic self-sufficiency to the 562 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments. The Assistant Secretary also oversees the BIA, which is responsible for providing services to approximately 1.8 million individual American Indians and Alaska Natives from the federally recognized tribes.
