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November 26, 2007

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## UMaine Awarded More Than \$1.5 Million for Wood Bioproduct Research

April 5, 2007

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ORONO, Maine – The Department of Energy (DOE) has awarded more than \$1.5 million in federal funding to the University of Maine to advance the university's ongoing efforts to develop methods for converting biomass from Maine's forests into fuels and valuable chemicals. The state will contribute 50 percent in matching funds to the multi-faceted project through the Maine Economic Improvement Fund.

The money, which was awarded through the DOE's Experimental Programs to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR), will be added to the \$6.9 million the Forest Bioproducts Research Initiative (FBRI) received as part of the National Science Foundation's EPSCoR award in 2006.

The UMaine initiative is a truly collaborative, multidisciplinary effort that brings together scientists from educational institutions and businesses across the state to develop effective and efficient methods for transforming waste products from paper processing and other wood-based enterprises into fuels, plastics, and other materials.

"This project adds the thermal conversion pathway to our earlier biochemical conversion focus for the utilization of woody biomass to produce biofuels and other co-products," says Hemant Pendse, chair of UMaine's Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering. "Together these projects put UMaine in the position of strength to deal with the entire spectrum of technical issues involved in biomass conversion."

Supporting 12 researchers from across the state, the new research cluster will allow UMaine to expand its efforts to overcome the technological barriers faced by Maine companies currently working to develop effective techniques for producing wood-based fuels and chemicals within the wood products industry's existing infrastructure.

"Forest biomass, including logging residue, pulp mill residue and spent liquors from pulp mills, hogfuel and sawdust, represents a significant renewable resource in Maine. Efficient use of this resource using our existing forest products industry manufacturing assets will help us save Maine jobs and build new businesses," said Pendse. "New technologies coming out of university laboratories will help us to advance forest biorefinery deployment in Maine."

By using the funding to create a highly integrated and focused infrastructure for research, the project promises rapid advances in the area of bioproducts for Maine businesses and will help to establish Maine as a leader in bioproduct research and production.

This year, the Department of Energy awarded grants totaling \$7.5 million to universities in Maine, New Hampshire, Delaware and Kentucky for

research ranging from biofuels to nanomaterials, with states matching at least 50 percent of the awarded funds. The grants are part of an experimental program to improve the capability of universities to conduct nationally competitive, energy-related research in states that have historically received less federal research and development funding.



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