



## The Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA) Program at the University of Alaska, FY 2008

Renewable energy became an important issue when a gallon of gas spiked well over \$6/gallon in many Alaska communities. Rural communities receive fuel in one or two shipments each year. The cost of the fuel is determined at the time the shipment is contracted and remains there until the next shipment. There is a need in Alaska for renewable energy resources, such as wood energy. In FY 2008, University of Alaska RREA-supported projects focused on economic opportunities for forest resources, including resources for wood energy.

Two wood energy projects advanced over this period. On Prince of Wales Island in southeast Alaska, the Craig Woody Biomass Project now provides heat for the municipal swimming pool and Craig's elementary and middle schools. Waste from a local sawmill fuels this project - a direct result of Alaska RREA-related activities and inspired by the Fuels for Schools program. Further north, another woody biomass project is in the engineering phase in the Copper River Valley community of Kenny Lake. This project will utilize hazardous fuels from nearby spruce bark beetle killed forests and waste from local sawmills to heat the Kenny Lake School.

Interest in wood energy for municipal and industrial purposes has increased significantly over the last year. The Alaska Wood Energy Conference held in Fairbanks in November drew 165 individuals from across Alaska. The conference was a collaboration of the federal, state, and local agencies that make up the Alaska Wood Energy Development Working Group. RREA Extension staff presented during the conference and developed and manned a wood energy display as part of the event's evening trade show. Approximately 75 people visited the display to gather information and resources from UAF-CES. One of the Extension presentations detailed a firewood enterprise economic analysis for western Alaska Native villages. The analysis reported a mechanized winter firewood harvesting operation that could provide sustainable space heating for more than 2,000 homes in Kuskokwim River communities. Extension staff also participated in a statewide Alaska rural Energy Conference the following September. This conference provided Extension staff with good opportunities to engage many rural residents in discussions and provide resources on wood energy resources.

Other activities for RREA-funded positions included a tour of New England wood energy projects. Information gathered on this trip has been used to work with USDA Forest Service PNW to explore the manufacture and use of compressed wood waste bio-bricks for use as residential space heating fuel for southeast Alaska. The study examines consumer acceptance and product performance in wood stoves and other wood burning appliances. An Extension agent also collaborated with the U.S. Department of Energy renewable Energy Laboratory in Golden, CO, by participating in a technical panel reviewing proposals from Alaska Native organizations for wood energy development funds.

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