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United States Department of Agriculture - Rural Development
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USDA Rural Development awards Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Grants

Westminster, VT- Date: September 29, 2008 – Two maple producers and one dairy farm operation will benefit from the Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency (RE/EE) Grants and Loan Guarantee they are receiving from USDA Rural Development (RD). Today in Windham County, Vermont Governor Jim Douglas joined the USDA RD team to celebrate these important investments.

“Renewable energy has many benefits and the Rural Development backed projects will help Vermont work toward its goal of producing 25% of its energy from farms, forest and other working lands.” Governor Douglas said. “In Vermont we have many natural resources that can be converted into renewable and responsible energy options.”

Westminster Energy Group, LLC plans to use their RD Renewable Energy Grant of \$358,993 towards the purchase and construction of an anaerobic digester system. The RD Renewable Energy Loan Guarantee of \$348,268 enables the Westminster Energy Group to realize affordable rates and terms with their lender, Vermont Agriculture Credit Corporation, for additional funds needed for this project. The RD funds leveraged with a 2007 grant received by Westminster Energy Group from the Vermont Clean Energy Development Fund, will allow Westminster Farm, owned by the Clayton Goodell family, to move forward with this project which has been in the planning and funding stages for several years. Westminster Farms is looking forward to the benefits they will receive from the completed project’s energy generation when they’ll be able to sell the power generated from the methane digester to Green Mountain Power, which is a critical component of the overall success of this project.

Mary Powell, President and CEO of Green Mountain Power said, “We are quite pleased to have been able to work with the Westminster Farm to make their farm methane digester a reality. Our ability to direct grants for renewable energy projects and our interest in purchasing the power is an important factor to make the economics work for our customers and the renewable generators. The addition of this plant will further diversify Green Mountain Power’s renewable energy mix, which, by the time this plant comes on line in 2009, will also include hydro, wind, landfill gas, biomass and solar.”

Richard Lockerby dba as Lockerby Sugarhouse of Chester, VT received a \$3,708 Energy Efficiency Grant and Richardson Farm in Hartland, VT received a \$6,399 grant. Both maple producers will use the grant funds to purchase and install reverse osmosis equipment. They anticipate a combined energy savings of over \$12,000 annually or 53 cord of wood.

“USDA Rural Development recognizes the importance of renewable energy and energy efficiency, particularly during these days of high energy costs and limited resources. Providing resource funding to agricultural producers and small businesses throughout Vermont will help our recipients reduce energy consumption and improve operations.” said Jolinda LaClair, State Director for USDA Rural Development. “We look forward to continued success in funding RE/EE projects-- helping Vermonters finance projects that are good for the economy and good for the bottom line of the participating businesses.”

USDA Rural Development’s mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life in Rural America. This is done by providing financial and technical assistance to foster growth and new opportunities for business development, home ownership, and critical community and technology infrastructure. To learn more about USDA Rural Development programs visit the web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/vt>.

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