USDA Rural Development Announces 13 Businesses to Receive Grants Totaling $119,700 For Energy in Rural Maine

Thirteen Maine businesses were selected earlier this year to receive grants under the USDA Rural Development Rural Energy for America Program.

"These 13 businesses are receiving funding under the vital Rural Energy for America Program," USDA Rural Development Under Secretary Lisa Mensah said. "These grants will help the businesses achieve longterm sustainability through lower energy costs, and will help preserve Maine's pristine environment through utilization of renewable energy sources."

In addition to REAP, USDA Rural Development offers other programs that can assist with renewable energyand energy efficiency. For example, the Advanced Biofuel Payment Program supports the production of biofuels from a variety of sources including food waste and biomass. USDA Rural Development has provided nearly $65,000 to Maine Standard Biofuels, and $1 million to support Maine's pellet companies since the program began in 2009.

Below is the list of the 13 Maine businesses that are receiving a total of $119,700 through the REAP Program:

Bar Harbor Community Farm LLC, Bar Harbor, $6,868 – Funds will be used to buy and install a roofmounted 8.42 kilowatt solar photovoltaic system on a seedling greenhouse. Generated energywill meet the business' demands and support yearround production and marketing.

Bruce Buck, (Buck Farms), Mapleton, $5,001 – Funds will be used to install a biomass boiler using wood pellets to heat a malting facility previously used as an unheated potato storage facility. The boiler will produce 46,893 kWh of energy, which will allow for temperature control and hot water. This is crucial to processing this small farmer's grain crops.

County Energy Solutions, LLC, Fort Fairfield, $6,792 – Funds will be used to install a groundmounted, dualaxis solar tracking photovoltaic system at the facility. This is a 6,840 watt system, generating 11,584 kW annually.

F.W. Thurston Co., Inc., Bernard, $11,738 – Funds will be used to install a roof mounted 12.93 kW solar PV system producing 16,173 kWh of energy annually. This will replace 18 percent of the business' energy demands.

Frederic Flewelling, Crouseville, $4,499 – Funds will be used to install variable frequency drives on potato storage ventilation fans. Constant operation at a reduced speed instead of intermittent full speed will save 22,161 kWh of electricity annually.

JG SL Partners, LLC, Freeport, $5,590 – Funds will be used to install a roofmounted 6.89 kW solar PV system producing 8,370 kWh annually. This will replace 38 percent of the business' energy demands.

North Country Rivers, Inc., Bingham, $7,772 – Funds will be used to install a high efficiency, ductless, air source heat pump to provide supplemental heating and cooling, saving more than 1,819 kWh of energy per year.

Paris Auto Barn, LLC, South Paris, $12,397 – Funds will be used to install a roof mounted 13.5 kW solar PV system that is expected to meet all of the company's energy demands by producing 15,651 kWh annually.

Solonely Acres, LLC, Solon, $19,980 – Funds will be used to install a 5ton geothermal heat pump system and a 16.83 kW solar PV system to a commercial storage building. This system will generate more than 57,000 kWh of clean energy, meeting this business' energy demands.

Thompson Cottages, Inc., New Harbor, $3,600 – Funds will be used to buy and install a 4 kW solar PV system on two seasonal cottages. This system will meet the energy demands of these cottages, produce 5,258 kWh annually and contribute to the long term goal of all the cottages being powered by solar alone.

TMDE Calibration Labs, Inc., Richmond, $18,750 – Funds will be used to buy and install a roofmounted 25 kW solar PV system that is expected to meet all of the business' energy demands by producing 33,565 kWh annually.

Keena Tracy, Lisbon Falls, $4,554 – Funds will be used to buy and install a 6.12 kW solar PV roofmounted system. This system will produce 8,205 kWh annually, meeting this business' energy demands

Wilbur's of Maine Chocolate Confections, Freeport, $12,159 – Funds will be used to buy and install a roofmounted 15.4 kW solar PV system that is expected to replace more than 13 percent of the business' energy demands. This system will produce 20,805 kWh annually.

REAP was created by the 2002 Farm Bill and was reauthorized by the 2014 Farm Bill. The new Census of Agriculture shows the number of farms utilizing renewable energy production has doubled in the last five years.

Since 2009, USDA has awarded $545 million to support more than 8,800 REAP projects nationwide. This includes $361 million in grants and loans for almost 2,900 renewable energy systems. When fully operational, these projects are estimated to generate and save 7.3 billion kilowatt hours of electricity annually – enough to power more than 660,000 homes for a year. For the remaining 5,900 projects, USDA provided $184 million to help rural small businesses and agricultural producers make energy efficiency improvements such as lighting; heating, ventilation and cooling; irrigation; insulation and motor replacements.

Eligible agricultural producers and rural small businesses may use REAP funds to make energy efficiency improvements or install renewable energy systems, including solar, wind, renewable biomass (including anaerobic digesters), small hydroelectric, ocean energy, hydrogen and geothermal.