



Committed to the future of rural communities.

OREGON—Rural Utilities Service

Alternative Energy

Public Facility Replaces Foreign Oil with Local Wood Pellets

Outline Of Need:

To remain competitive while supporting local economies, communities and organizations everywhere are cutting costs, finding new efficiencies, and linking to local supply chains whenever possible. The small rural airport serving Oregon's Grant County, which averages one person per square mile, is no exception. Small businesses and private aviation rely on the Grant County Regional Airport in John Day, Oregon, to help them do business. The airport, itself, also supports a number of local jobs by housing the US Forest Service fire base serving the region's rugged and remote federal forests and wilderness areas. In addition, local residents and health care providers rely on the airport for emergency medical flights to larger hospitals and specialized care. Along with a number of actions to efficiently and affordably accommodate local needs now and in the future, the airport decided to install a biomass heating system using locally produced fuels to replace inefficient oil furnaces.

How Rural Development Helped:

Through the Community Facilities program, USDA Rural Development provided a \$29,700 grant to help offset the cost of the \$200,000 project in 2010.

The Results:

The airport's new biomass heating system incorporates compact fuel storage, conveyance, combustion and boiler elements that can be operated remotely and generate only handfuls of ash. Computerized controls allow the site man-

Top: The Grant County Regional Airport in rural Eastern Oregon is a valuable asset to residents and the economy by ensuring emergency transportation, a forest fire base, onsite jobs, and options for rural businesses, as well as through its support for local wood pellet manufacturers.

Bottom: (Former) airport manager Colin English shows USDA Rural Development State Director Vicki Walker how the biomass system automatically feeds wood pellets from the fuel storage bin on the left to the boiler.



ager to regulate temperatures in each area of the airport to conserve energy. Through energy conservation and elimination of high heating oil costs, the facility saves approximately \$30,000 each year. The system has worked so well that local schools are also looking to convert to biomass heating as well.

In addition to saving the county money on energy costs, the new system burns wood pellets produced at a local mill. Faced with a number of challenges in the lumber industry, local mills have worked to preserve jobs by producing briquettes and pellets from the biomass in surrounding forests. As additional public facilities and local businesses access this technology, those working in Oregon's biomass industry will realize new opportunities.

August 2012

Fast Facts

Program:	Community Facility Grant
Investment:	\$29,700
Additional Funding:	Grant County, \$51,000 Private Donations, \$117,300
Community:	Grant County Population 1,850
Energy Savings:	\$30,000 per year (estimated)

