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22 NOVEMBER 2010

Contact: Kathryn Fernholz 612-333-0430, [katie@dovetailinc.org](mailto:katie@dovetailinc.org)

Cheryl Miller, [camiller@umn.edu](mailto:camiller@umn.edu), (651) 653-8133

George Wilkes, [gwilkes@boreal.org](mailto:gwilkes@boreal.org), 218 387 2137

Gary Atwood, [garwood@boreal.org](mailto:garwood@boreal.org), 218-387-2852

<http://www.dovetailinc.org/content/new-project-explore-biomass-energy-northern-minnesota>

## New Project to Explore Biomass Energy for Northern Minnesota

(Grand Marais, MN) The Cook County Board of Commissioners in conjunction with the Cook County Local Energy Project (CCLEP) has authorized a project to explore the feasibility of community-based biomass energy production. The emphasis of the project will be on understanding the short and long-term environmental, social, and economic impacts of utilizing woody biomass in northeastern Minnesota.

A public meeting on the project will be held at 7:00 PM on Thursday, December 9th, in the Cook County Courthouse Commissioners Room in Grand Marais.

The project is being led by Dovetail Partners, a Minnesota-based non-profit organization that provides authoritative information about the impacts and trade-offs of environmental decisions, including consumption choices, land use, and policy alternatives.

“This project will help the community make a well-informed decision about moving forward with a biomass energy program,” says Kathryn Fernholz, Executive Director for Dovetail Partners.

Additional collaborators on the project include researchers from the University of Minnesota and members of the Cook County Local Energy Project. The project is part of a larger study proposal submitted to the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) addressing community bioenergy feasibilities.

“The research will identify the full spectrum of biomass energy technologies that could be applied in Cook County, including different scales of operation, different systems and designs, and individual facilities as well as combined heat and power. The project will also assess ownership and organizational options and financing for bioenergy facilities,” says George Wilkes, CCLEP member.

The feasibility and impact of biomass energy systems will be assessed regionally by collecting information about a full range of available sources of biomass and the potential annual volumes. Available biomass could include waste wood, right-of-way clearing and tree removals, materials generated by the FireWise program and wildfire mitigation, residue from businesses, residual from commercial timber harvesting, biomass from pre-commercial harvests, and other resources that may be identified. University of Minnesota researchers will develop site-specific estimates of current and future forest biomass feedstocks under a variety of forest management scenarios and supply targets.

“Additional considerations impacting supply, including material and transportation costs, equipment limitations, timing of supply, storage issues, available labor force and the long-term sustainability of biomass energy systems in Grand Marais and Cook County will be assessed,” says Dennis Becker, researcher with the University of Minnesota.

Gary Atwood of Lutsen has been hired as the local coordinator of the project. He is a 17-year resident of Cook County with a strong background in technical communications.

“This is a comprehensive project that is being designed to answer many questions citizens have about biomass energy potentials in this region,” Atwood said.

The project will produce a mid-term report in late 2011 and full project results in 2012. Additional information and updates about the project will be made available at the project webpage:

<http://dovetailinc.org/cookcounty>

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#### About Dovetail Partners

Dovetail Partners is a Minnesota-based non-profit organization that provides authoritative information about the impacts and trade-offs of environmental decisions, including consumption choices, land use, and policy alternatives.