



The town of Enterprise in northeast Oregon is the location of a new biomass boiler that runs on renewable wood fuel and will save money for the local school district.

Photo by Kevin Weeks, ODF

Forest to Fuel: *school district makes use of biomass energy*

Kevin Weeks, ODF Agency Affairs Specialist

The Enterprise School District in September cut the ribbon on a new forest biomass energy facility that seeks to save the District \$76,000 per year in energy costs and use existing forest wood wastes in Wallowa County. The 1.5 million dollar project is the first biomass boiler system to be installed in an Oregon school district in more than 50 years.

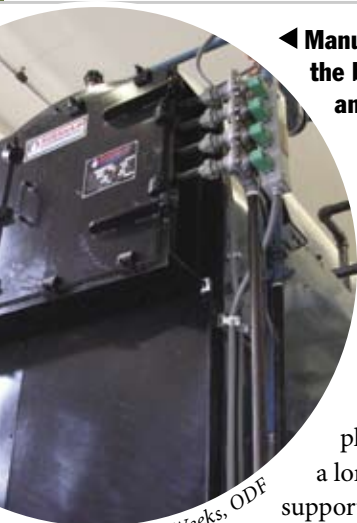
“This project demonstrates that by working together we can restore forest health, create economic growth in rural communities, and help Oregon meet its ambitious goals to reduce carbon emissions,” states Governor Ted Kulongoski. “This project is a model for other communities across the state.”

“Enterprise is the first Oregon K-12 school district that has converted from a diesel to a woody biomass fueled heating system,” said Brandon Adams, energy specialist with the Oregon Department of Energy. “Enterprise is also the first school to utilize the new state tax credit for renewable energy by using the pass-through option for entities without a tax liability.”

Project qualified for energy tax credit

The biomass project, which took nearly a year to complete, is the first project of its type to qualify for Oregon’s new Renewable Business Energy Tax credit, which provided almost a third of the cost. The project allows construction money to stay in the local economy, while the boiler system makes use of wood that would otherwise increase forest fire risk.

The biomass boiler uses renewable wood fuel provided by the remnants of forest management activities and wood manufacturing residues from wood products companies in Wallowa and Union counties. The biomass boiler was manufactured by Oregon-based SolaGen.



◀ **Manufactured by Oregon-based SolaGen, the biomass boiler runs on wood chips and aids the local economy.**

Reducing forest fuels, keeping forests healthy

The Oregon Department of Forestry in La Grande worked closely with Wallowa Resources in Enterprise and other project partners to develop a plan that would ensure the school district a long-term supply of biomass fuel – while supporting forest fire fuel reduction objectives within Wallowa County’s Community Wildfire

Protection Plan.

“The energy put forth by people to see this project be successful not only benefits a school district’s budget, but it also builds community pride, aids the local economy and assists in keeping our forests healthy by creating a market for waste wood,” said Rick Wagner, stewardship forester with ODF’s La Grande Unit. “It’s a model for other school districts in Oregon to follow, and perhaps a foundation for other woody biomass projects in Wallowa County.”

The Enterprise School District contracted the project to the energy service company McKinstry Essention, based in Seattle. McKinstry, in collaboration with a team of local contractors, constructed the building that houses the boiler and biomass materials.

“McKinstry enjoyed being involved in the project for so many reasons,” says Cam Hamilton, Business Development Manager for McKinstry’s Portland office. “The people of Enterprise are wonderful, the school district board and administration were engaged and involved, and it keeps the resources in the local economy. It is a win for all involved.”

The project has been in development for several years thanks to a unique public-private partnership between Wallowa Resources, the Enterprise School District, Oregon Department of Energy and the Oregon Department of Forestry. In 2004, Wallowa Resources contracted with the Biomass Energy Resource Center (BERC) to evaluate the potential for developing a market for low-grade biomass use for energy in public schools in Wallowa County. BERC’s analysis found that the Enterprise School was an excellent site for a fully-automated wood chip heating system, and would save substantially on heating fuel costs.

It’s estimated the Enterprise School District’s new biomass system will save more than 45,000 gallons of fuel oil per year, and is expected to reduce CO2 emissions by 1.016 million pounds – equivalent to removing 67 cars from the road annually, or planting 138 acres of trees in Oregon each year. 🌲



Mark Kendall, Oregon Department of Energy, presents a recognition award for the biomass boiler project to Nils Christofferson, right, chair of the Enterprise School District board.



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