

Forest Concepts Awarded USDA SBIR Phase I Contract for Biomass Feedstocks

May 1, 2008

Auburn, WA – Forest Concepts, LLC today launched a new \$80,000 Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Phase I contract from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to develop improved methods to supply woody biomass feedstocks to the bio-products and bioenergy industries. This is Forest Concepts' fourth USDA-SBIR contract related to forest products.

The current paradigm for dealing with most forest residuals and woody biomass is to chip or grind it to reduce the cost of disposal in landfills or at compost producers. Chipped and shredded woody biomass is essentially worthless for wood products because it is a mixture of bark, leaves, wood, and debris. The core premise of the project is that commingled woody biomass chips and shreds contain significant amounts of bole and branch wood which have economic value. If a process was available to separate the clean wood fraction from the rest of the chips, then more fiber would become available to forest products firms that are supply-limited today.

The objective of the SBIR project is to increase the utility of field-processed woody biomass material by separating the wood content from other materials. If most of the wood content could be separated and cleaned, then more wood fiber would be available in the marketplace and processors would receive more revenue for their material. A premise of this project is that reprocessing this material "in town" can create new jobs, additional fiber for local markets, and economic activity in communities hard hit by the loss of traditional forest industry employers. Research and experiments will focus on a range of proprietary materials separation technologies. Process engineering will evaluate system flows, capital costs and operating costs. If the results of the Phase I research are positive, the Company may apply in 2009 for a \$300,000 Phase II development and process validation grant.

Forest Concepts' three previous SBIR contracts have resulted in new products and markets for wood products. WoodStraw™ wood-strand erosion control material is widely used across the western United States for erosion control on highway projects, forest trails, mine site reclamation, and post-wildfire projects. Siskin Ridge™ roundwood products and materials improve the connection between urban consumers and rural communities. The latest SBIR funded project resulted in a method to bale brush and tree trimmings as an alternative to chipping by landscapers and arborists. Baled brush and trimmings enable low-cost delivery to cogeneration power plants and other biomass users.

Established in 1998, Forest Concepts, LLC is a forest products company with a new way of thinking about the industry and markets for wood-based materials. Products and technologies we created during the past ten years enable renewal of forest communities through value-added utilization of small diameter materials and other woody biomass. We are a nationally recognized leader in the commercialization of new uses for smallwood and biomass that is available as a co-product of forest management and wildfire protection. We develop and manufacture specialized smallwood structures and related materials for the habitat enhancement, threatened and endangered species protection, erosion control, environmental restoration, green building, and landscape markets. We provide professional services to federal, state and local agencies for business planning, product development, and biomass utilization. For more information visit our corporate web site www.forestconcepts.com.

Digital photos are available.

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