



**Western Biomass Energy Feedstock Partnership  
Workshop Discussion  
Executive Summary**

August 27-29, 2007  
DoubleTree Hotel at the Lloyd Center  
Portland, Oregon

**Partnership Goal**

The availability of biomass feedstocks for energy production varies regionally because of differences in production and marketing factors such as soil type, climate, and competing uses. A consistent and reliable supply of biomass feedstocks is critical to energy production. The goal of the Western Regional Biomass Energy Feedstock partnership is to facilitate the development, evaluation, and delivery of existing and emerging biomass feedstocks in an economically feasible and environmentally sustainable manner.

**Partnership Collaborators**

- ◆ Western Sun Grant Regional Center
- ◆ Oregon State University
- ◆ US Departments of Agriculture, Energy and Transportation
- ◆ Oregon Departments of Agriculture and Energy
- ◆ Western Governors' Association
- ◆ Western Sustainable Agricultural Research and Extension
- ◆ Pacific Northwest, Idaho and Oak Ridge National Laboratories

**Workshop Goal**

The overall objective for the workshop was to examine the opportunities for implementing a biobased economy in the West. The workshop also provided an opportunity to establish dialog and working partnerships among the entities and individuals participating in the workshop. The individual working groups convened at the workshop had more specific objectives for their discussions.

Working Groups and Their Leaders

1. Agricultural energy crops – Russ Karow and Steve Petrie, Oregon State University
2. Agricultural residues – Gary Banowetz, USDA-Agricultural Research Service
3. Woody energy crops – Mike Cloughesy, Oregon Forest Resources Institute
4. Woody residues, wastewoods, and invasives – Scott Leavengood, Oregon State University and Mark Kendall, Oregon Department of Energy

5. Other biowaste resources – Hong Liu and Mike Gamroth, Oregon State University
6. Biochemical conversion – Christine Kelly, Mike Penner and Alan Bakalinsky, Oregon State University
7. Thermochemical conversion – Dennis Stiles, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory
8. Other conversion technologies – John Bolte, Oregon State University
9. Economics and Policy – Jon Yoder and Phil Wandschneider, Washington State University
10. Business Planning – Dennis Stiles, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory
11. Environment – Catherine Clark and Yao Yin, Oregon State University
12. Communications and Outreach – Peg Herring, Oregon State University

#### Biomass Groups (Agriculture, Woody, and Other)

Objective: To examine biomass availability, location, abundance, characteristics and quality in the region.

The biomass groups met to better understand the ability of the Western region to deliver biomass for biofuels and other bioproducts. In addition, they identified criteria to determine sustainability of these resources for the West and its communities, such as concerns, opportunities and needs. They also asked what are assumptions commonly made; what drives our assumptions, biases, values, directions; and are there new paths to consider?

#### Technology Groups (Biochemical, Thermochemical, And Other)

Objective: To explore new or refine existing conversion technologies for existing or new feedstock streams.

Each technology group examined the constraints and opportunities for their suite of technologies and considered the top 2-4 interdisciplinary, multi-institutional, intersectoral frameworks or projects that would suit and enhance the opportunities in the Western region.

#### Cross-Cutting Groups (Environmental, Economic, Business and Communications/Outreach)

Objective: To examine major areas of impact from delivering feedstocks for bioproduct production

Each cross-cutting group examined the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for delivery of feedstocks from their particular perspective.

### **Summary of Workshop Outcomes**

#### **Biomass Feedstock Supply**

**Agricultural Feedstocks:** Crops identified with the greatest potential for additional work in the western region are safflower, canola, camelina, mustards, and grain residues in dryland, and camelina, canola, sweet sorghum and switchgrass on irrigated acreages (ideas for specific crops are available in the working group summary). The group felt that an agroecozone approach to identify representative locations for initial “high risk of failure” trial work would be most productive. Investments need to be made in two areas - on high risk crops such as camelina and

on developed crops such as canola in which there is still a “flaw.” Given the high value of crops grown on available arable lands and limited water availability in the West, focus must be on crops that can be grown under deficit irrigation and on marginal irrigated and dryland ground. Double cropping needs to be considered in irrigated areas. Research is needed to investigate dual purpose crop use and to develop a standard energy lifecycle analysis system for use in assessing crops, waste use, etc.

**Agricultural Residues:** Rational placement of conversion facilities is dependent upon knowledge of regional and local feedstock availability, including agricultural residues. Major issues in the use of residues as biofuel feedstock are the impact of their removal on environmental sustainability as well as temporal and spatial supply, and storage characteristics. Synthesis of information on residue requirements for maintenance of soil quality, standard metrics for defining soil quality, and the impact of residue removal is needed. Additionally, compositional differences in crop residues impact their suitability as feedstock for conversion processes. In some cases, there is opportunity to improve their suitability through plant breeding but more knowledge is needed about basic plant physiology, decomposition characteristics, and characterization of non-straw residues (i.e., oil crop residues, orchard trimmings, fruit crops, etc.). Other important points included the recognition that potential feedstock has benefit as a soil amendment that needs to be included in valuation of feedstock; the potential for use of Conservation Reserve Program biomass as feedstock, and decomposition that impacts feedstock value during storage. Partnerships will be critical in addressing the multiple objectives of utilization as feedstock, environmental sustainability, economic analyses, and ultimate commercialization of new technologies. There is a need to quantify and understand how competing uses, changing policy, and market conditions impact residue supply and feedstock supply “uncertainty.” Research is needed to optimize the use of residues, to investigate dual purpose crop use, and to develop a standard energy lifecycle analysis system for use in assessing crops, waste use, etc.

**Woody Biomass and Residues:** Discussion covered woody feedstocks from energy crops, forest biomass, and urban wood waste. Participants examined availability, level of detail/resolution for inventories, return on investment, social implications (especially on public lands, which is a high percentage in the West) and ecosystem services, and research needs. The group talked about building a “matrix” that would essentially be a hierarchy of tables containing information about feedstocks and attributes outlined in the group report. The major categories of woody biomass are: forest restoration thinnings (for fire, habitat, scenic, etc.), logging slash, hazardous fuel reduction, rangeland restoration (e.g., juniper harvesting & utilization), urban wood waste (mixed wood and urban wastes, wood waste), orchard, vineyard, nursery, and Christmas tree residues, energy crops (such as poplar and eucalyptus), mill residues, and lumber (e.g., low-grade lumber chipped for pulp).

**Animal Production and Industrial Waste Streams:** The biowaste sources discussed in this group included municipal solid waste (MSW), sewage sludge, animal waste and manure, and organic materials in industrial waste streams. Information about the volume, distribution, quality, and characteristics of these materials is spotty but some states have inventories with varying degrees of completeness and level of evaluation. The current uses are varied, from the use of algae to remove nutrients to the use of manure and fish waste solids in place of peat. Most are

underutilized but barriers to their use, including the lack of policies, are numerous. Inconsistent focus on these biomass sources can lead to duplication or overlap in research efforts, which a coordination scheme could mitigate. A few governmental incentives are available but integration and cooperatives between animal and food wastes are needed to make use economical. Additionally, environmentally friendly and high efficacy technologies are needed including the development of carbon sequestration techniques for long-term storage of carbon from bio-wastes.

### **BIOMASS SUMMARY:**

The focus of agricultural feedstocks must be on crops that can be grown under deficit irrigation and on marginal irrigated and dryland ground. Double cropping needs to be considered in irrigated areas. Research is needed to optimize the use of residues, to investigate dual purpose crop use, and to develop a standard energy lifecycle analysis system for use in assessing crops, waste use, etc.

Forestry/Woody feedstocks have several constraints to overcome. The primary one is that making fuel out of cellulose is not yet economical and there are a number of technological hurdles related to using mixed feedstocks. What products can be made from mixed feedstocks and can we manage the biomass stream to aim it to highest and best end use? Therefore, what policy incentives will encourage woody biomass use, including the use of slash and thinnings? There is also the fact that much of the forest resources are in public rather than private ownership and far removed from processing facilities.

There remain many obstacles to the use of wastestreams other than those of agricultural and forestry/woody production, which can be summarized as the lack of accurate inventories, technology, incentives, and policies.

## **Technologies**

**Biochemical Conversion:** Three major conclusions resulted regarding the development and improvement of biochemical conversion technologies: to develop improved fractionation methods (for example, lower cost separation of ethanol from fermentation broth), to develop a set of standard pretreatments, and to develop strategies for handling inhibitory compounds in fermentation platforms. With regards to fractionation, the Western Region has a large variety of biomass feedstocks and thus pretreatments designed for a homogeneous feedstock supply are not expected to be directly applicable to this region.

Relative to the Midwest, the Western Region has a large variety of potential feedstocks for which pretreatments cannot be individually optimized due to significant cost; a set of standard pretreatments (along with a corresponding set of rapid assays to help choose the most appropriate pretreatment for a given feedstock or mix of feedstocks and that would accommodate the variety of feedstocks) would be a practical alternative. Finally, the diversity of feedstocks in the Western Region means that sugar platforms produced from biomass saccharification are likely to be unique with respect to nonsugar, inhibitory, components. There is an extreme need to develop useful ways of disposing of the lignin-rich residual, thus there is a need for more research focused on lignin chemistry. It is clear that developing methods for handling such inhibitors will be important. This effort should include inhibitor characterization, development of detoxification processes, and development of robust microorganisms able to

tolerate such inhibitors. Overall, efforts should be multidisciplinary, include life-cycle and economic analyses, have high technical merit, and state the degree to which the project facilitates commercial implementation. A minimum value option is to recover the heat value from lignocellulosic material without having to dry it first, but ideally research could identify ways to get higher value uses from that material, thereby improving the overall economics of the fermentation-centered biorefinery.

**Thermochemical Conversion:** The potential benefits of technologies such as gasification and pyrolysis are that they accommodate a wide range and quality of feedstocks and afford many more product options, including alcohols but also hydrocarbon fuels. These technologies could be more readily adapted to the biomass resources available in the west (e.g., wood) than the biological conversion options and could fit well with the existing refining and fuel distribution infrastructure as well. There are a number of ongoing research programs and operating demonstration projects in the West that could be used to accelerate that adaptation and to facilitate deployment in the West. However, many challenges or barriers were noted for the current generation of gasification and pyrolysis processes and thermochemical technology in general. The group concluded that:

- ◆ Thermochemical systems do handle a multiplicity of feedstock and the systems can be quite flexible, but there is a need for some significant simplification of the systems and standardization of the products.
- ◆ Standardization of product is particularly important for pyrolysis.
- ◆ Capital costs of these gasification systems must be cut by 30-50% to get into a capital expenditure range acceptable to investors.
- ◆ There are a number of start-up (and a few established) companies that are making some very bold claims for their systems, but there are no operating facilities and only limited laboratory data to back these claims. There needs to be some means to validate these claims before investors will commit -- a regional validation center was suggested as one means to accomplish that.

Priority research and development topics suggested included:

- ◆ Development of small-scale (e.g., farm scale) gasification systems and the accompanying small-scale synthesis gas chemistry & reactor systems to enable distributed gasification and fuel synthesis. Microtechnology could be a key enabling element of reducing the size and cost of the synthesis reactors.
- ◆ Thorough exploration of all of the potential bio-oil upgrading strategies and demonstration of the most promising chemistries. This would open the door for more pyrolysis projects.
- ◆ Development of higher-yield synthesis gas chemistry processes, particularly for Fischer-Tropsch and mixed alcohol syntheses.
- ◆ Development of improved gas clean-up systems
- ◆ Development of alternative thermochemical processes better suited to the specific carbon/hydrogen/oxygen composition of biomass.
- ◆ New systems for O<sub>2</sub> separation in oxygen blown gasifiers (would really cut the capital cost)
- ◆ New systems to improve the heat transfer performance in indirectly heated gasifiers
- ◆ Capture & immobilization of pollutants in synthetic gas stream (e.g., mercury, chlorine, etc.)

**Other Conversion Technologies:** This group identified other and emerging technologies for biomass conversion, particularly for mixed biomass in the West. Of critical concern were technologies for pretreatment, conversion, extraction, and coproduction.

- ◆ Pretreatment/fermentation technologies for lignin defractionation along with lignin recovery technology for petrochemical and other uses – systems integration was a key aspect, as were enzymes and other systems for co-processing multiple feedstocks and continuous flow transesterification technology with closed product capture. Information system needs included sensor systems for classification of mixed biomass, harvesting equipment, and other processing steps; steam explosion technology for lignin defractionation; ability to transfer LIDAR data into farm/forest biomass density determination.
- ◆ Microbial fuel cells and anaerobic digesters technologies
- ◆ Harvesting and extraction technologies for producing oil from algae and biohydrogen
- ◆ Coproduct management discussion also included on-farm nutrient management
- ◆ There was also discussion about the need for less expensive ASTM certification process, particularly for on-farm biodiesel, alternatives for transesterification for biodiesel, biogas engines, improved or new on-farm equipment for handling biocrops, mobile conversion technologies (e.g., forest residue gasification/liquefaction), and storage/handling of mixed feedstocks.

### **Cross-Cutting Issues**

**Economics and Policy:** The key points for the Economics and Policy group were defining parameters for setting policy goals for the West and identifying three major policy areas. Investments in research, development and infrastructure were recommended to facilitate biofuel market emergence. Distinguishing between the roles and targets for public versus private investment is a needed step. Three major components for investigation were explored in detail.

- ◆ Infrastructure development issues
- ◆ Biofuel content standards
- ◆ Carbon index versus fuel based incentives

**Business Planning:** Current consumer interest in biofuels creates a unique timing for investment and funding. In the West, the market is growing. Proximity to major consumer markets is a key differentiator, especially when markets integrate well with existing infrastructure such as rail and barge, and power grids. In California and Washington, there are unique market opportunities; but distributed processing technology may limit growth unless the products could be branded.

The business challenges are numerous: technology uncertainty with a long time to maturity, siting complexity, high capital requirements, a fuels commodity market where margins are low, difficult resource sourcing and pricing, and geographic distances, to name a few. Technology may or may not be the key enabler.

Some lessons learned from business models. are: maximize the value of the resource; pursue products that have value and can be value priced; optimize siting and scale; evaluate local production, carefully select technology that avoids large capital outlays and reduce risk.

One of the common needs noted in the resource sessions and in this session was the role that the Land Grants could play in helping business understand the following:

- ◆ where the resource is within the region
- ◆ how much of that resource can be removed sustainably (particularly true for straw).
- ◆ what business model makes sense to acquire that resource (e.g., contracts with 500 individual farmers vs. a "biomass exchange" where prices could be set). The whole problem of pricing/sourcing was a BIG uncertainty for the business guys in the session. Seems like a good topic for ag or natural resource economists to me.

**Environmental Sustainability:** In the West, the top environmental dimensions surrounding the growth, development, transportation, conversion, and use of biomass feedstocks and bioenergy were soil, water, forest health, and atmosphere/climate. Emerging issues included infrastructure building and maintenance, energy for irrigation, genetically modified organisms, carbon sequestration, bioplastics as a significant industry product, greenhouse gas mitigation, and related social issues. The group identified critical information that was needed to make decisions about biomass energy and proposed mitigation strategies and/or policy changes for the sustainable development of biomass energy in the West.

**Communications and Outreach:** This group expressed the need for broader public education about issues and basic topics related to biomass production and biofuel development. A "Frequently Asked Questions" system was proposed. A set of questions about conversion and biofuel technologies was developed. However, it was noted that the scope and depth of content for any particular question varied from feedstock to feedstock. Some feedstocks, such as agricultural ones, will need more information about location and conversion. Other feedstocks will require more answers about removal of impediments or defining potential benefits. The initial list of questions proposed for the system included the following:

- ◆ How much is being produced and potentially available?
- ◆ Where is the field going?
- ◆ What are the currently available conversion technologies?
- ◆ What are the potential conversion technologies?
- ◆ What impeded developing new conversion technologies?
- ◆ How can those impediments be reduced?
- ◆ What are the potential benefits?
- ◆ What are the potential risks?
- ◆ Are there opportunities for technical support for
  - new industries
  - small-scale entrepreneurs
  - back-yard enthusiasts
- ◆ What more information is needed?
- ◆ How does this affect me?

Responses will be developed during the first half of 2008. It is expected that a webpage will be developed for the Western Center.

## Rappateur

John Ferrell, US Department of Energy, EERE (Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy)

Key points noted:

- ◆ Biomass Resource Assessment
  - Diverse, Mixed Feedstocks
  - Widely Distributed Feedstocks
  - Best fit with small-scale applications
  - Federal level – ARS and FS oriented to “Farm-scale”
  - “Sub-regions” should be further investigated
  
- ◆ Biomass Resource Development
  - Inventory existing plots from replicated field trials of dedicated energy crop and CRP lands
  - Propose experimental design for replicated field trials of dedicated energy crops and CRP lands
  - Agricultural residue removal tool (led by ARS/INL)
    - Corn stover FY08 focus (immediacy of problem)
    - Small grain straws sustainability
  - DOT/SGI field trails in Spring/Summer 2008
  
- ◆ Education & Outreach
  - Continued development/population of BIOWEB as an accessible information source on the Internet
  - Outreach activities
    - SARE (Sustainability)
    - Experiment Stations
    - Extension
  
- ◆ Optimizing the location of biorefineries in the Western United States using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and Linear Programming (LP) – Peter Tittmann, University of California at Davis
  - The infrastructural layer for a GIS system is critical for further development of this biomass partnership effort



## Workshop Participant List

Ag Feedstocks (Biomass Working Group)		
Jack	Breen	OSU
Jeff	Canaan	Washington Agriculture
Hal	Collins	USDA/ARS
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Russ	Karow	U of Hawaii
Charles	Kinoshita	Cascade Grain
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Marcus	Kauffman	Resource Innovations
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