



NEWS RELEASE

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Local Biofuels Research Funded by DOE Grants Projects focus on alternative fuels production

MADISON, Wis.— Scientists at the USDA Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) received \$739,000 in grants from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) in support of biofuels production research.

Two separate grants were awarded and each project will be funded over a period of three years.

Ken Hammel, research chemist at FPL, and John Ralph, research chemist at the U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center, were awarded \$468,000. Their research uses new nuclear magnetic resonance methods to identify the changes that wood decay fungi cause in lignin. Lignin must be removed from plant feedstocks prior to biofuels production, and fungal delignification methods are highly efficient. Therefore, this work will aid in the development of new biomass processing strategies that could reduce our reliance on imported petroleum products.

Chris Hunt, research chemist at FPL, and Hammel were also awarded \$271,000 to develop microscopic fluorescent sensors for measuring the amount, location, and type of chemicals fungi use to break down wood in the first stage of decay. These findings will also be used to improve biomass conversion to alternative fuels, such as ethanol.

“The economics of producing liquid fuels from forest biomass are not yet where they need to be in order to be viable in our market-based economy,” says FPL Director Chris Risbrudt. “The research work being undertaken with these two grants will materially contribute to improving the conversion efficiency of forest biomass to liquid transportation fuels using the chemistries employed by naturally occurring fungi.”

The U.S. Forest Service Forest Products Laboratory was established in 1910 in Madison, Wis., with the mission to conserve and extend the country’s wood resources. Today, FPL’s research scientists work with academic and industrial researchers and other government agencies in exploring ways to promote healthy forests and clean water and improve papermaking and recycling processes. Through FPL’s Advanced Housing Research Center, researchers also work to improve homebuilding technologies and materials. Information is available at FPL’s Web site: www.fpl.fs.fed.us.

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